

SIGHT AND SOUND

AUTUMN 1964 * 4/-/85c



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30th OCTOBER - 5th NOVEMBER 1964

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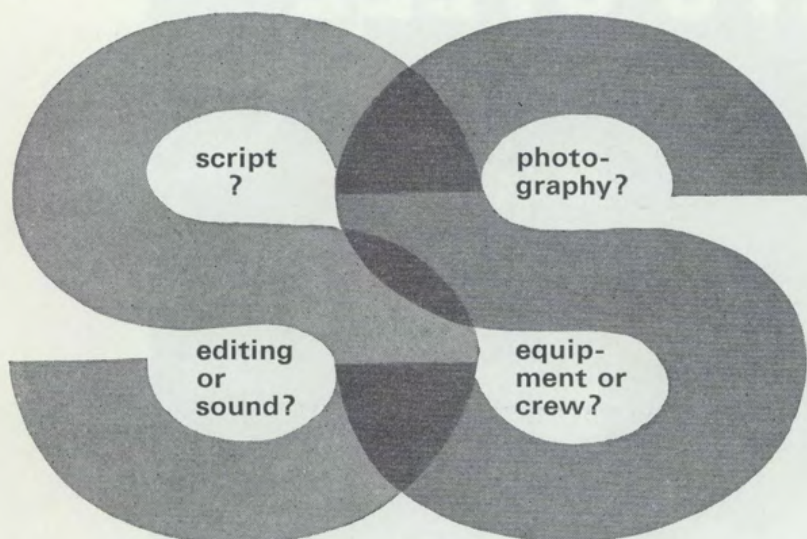
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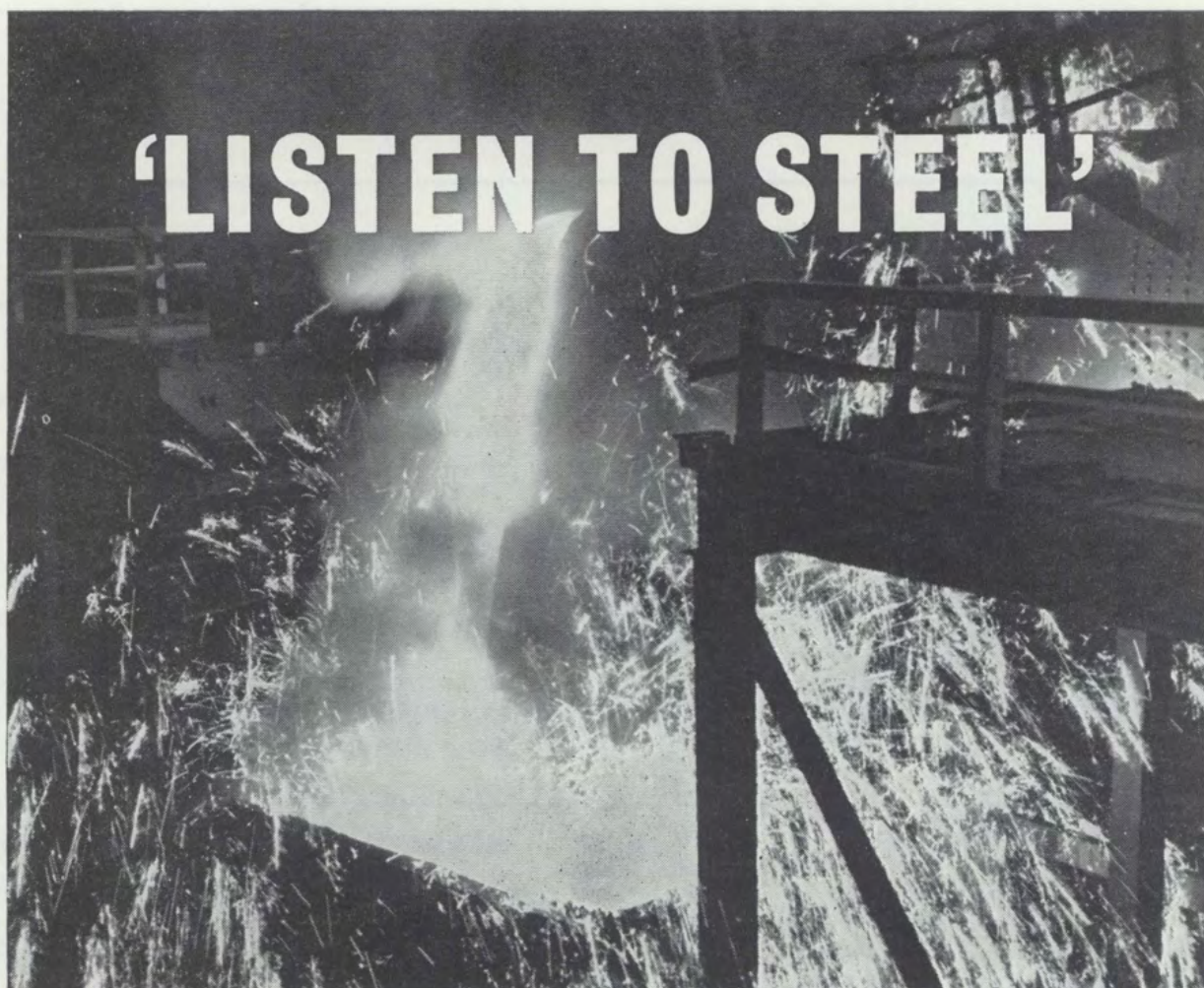
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THE INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

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THE FRONT
PAGE

The London Filmgoer

MARKET RESEARCH IS SOMETHING the cinema has never been much good at, and something that has been approached, on the whole, with a proper wariness. The risk is that film-makers will actually start believing what their researchers tell them, and will begin trying to create to some instant formula of commercial casting, story and title as revealed through all those alluring charts and graphs of the statisticians. The recent Survey of Cinema Going in Greater London commissioned by the Federation of British Film Makers, and carried out for them by Marketing Trends, Ltd., is characteristically sensible about this. "Since nobody deliberately produces a bad film," they say, "we have had to assume that film production at present is the best we have got." This Butlerian phrase effectively marks off the limit of the survey, and its recognition that creation is an area better left to the creators. What the researchers have done is to take a close look at the London market, to find out who now goes to the cinema, and in what circumstances, and what they think about it. The result is a document which stands remarkably on its own feet as a small piece of Sixties sociology; and although the Federation has issued it only in typescript form, it is going to be required reading for anyone interested in this freakishly neglected subject.

Much of the material, of course, amounts not to discovery but to confirmation of known facts. The sample interviewed was made up of 1,000 people, aged between 16 and 45, scattered around the London suburbs. Just on one-third of them had not been to a cinema for a year or more; 21 per cent went about once a month; 17 per cent about once a week. The once weekly audience, of course, is predominantly young, and to some extent the ritual still persists of the two visits to the cinema—once on a weekday to see a film; once on a Sunday afternoon to shout back at the screen ("We go for laughs, whatever the film—no, *no* film could get me into a serious mood if I'm with the gang . . ."). All the same, it is in this area that the cinema has suffered its heaviest losses. People who always went to the cinema occasionally may still go occasionally. It is the regulars who have deserted. In 1951 more than 70 per cent of the 16–24 age group in Britain went to the cinema at least once a week; now this is down to 40 per cent. It is worth noting, too, that the balance of the audience has shifted slightly, from more women than men in 1951 to more men than women today.

What is the cinema, for this audience? Should it be thought of, the survey enquires, as "something to go out to and not simply to drop in at," by encouraging the greater formalities of separate performances and booked seats? Sixteen per cent made their last visit to the cinema on

their own; and some felt a bit guilty about this, as though these solitary visits were some sort of betrayal of what ought to be a social occasion. One notes the extent to which film-going is an occupation for the young or the lonely, the people living in rented rooms, rather than for the married couples and solid householders, of whom nearly half had not been to the cinema for a year. "The cinema . . . shows up as the place to go for those who have no home of their own." And for those who have, it is not the TV set but the car that would seem to present most direct competition, because, as the survey neatly and cynically puts it, driving "similarly gives the illusion of an involvement in action." Outmoded though the attitude may seem, the cinema still remains the haunt of dreams.

Asked a slightly loaded question—did they consider themselves "the sort of person who knows more about new films than others?"—almost a quarter answered that they did. Information sources were regarded as Word of Mouth, Television, Local Papers, Posters, Sunday Papers, Daily Papers, in that descending order, with film magazines coming eleventh on a list of fourteen sources. But critics can take some comfort: "A third of those who have not been to the cinema in the last year still read the film reviews [what film reviews?] regularly." To an overwhelming extent, even the London suburban audience would seem to regard film-going as a strictly local activity, with the visit to a West End cinema reserved for a rare occasion. And it appears that many people firmly believe that films are cut for circuit showing (some undoubtedly are; but surely not that many) and that they are getting an inferior version of the product available to the privileged audiences of central London.

Complaints cancel each other out: some think that films are worse than they used to be, and rather more people think that they are better. For everyone who grumbles that cinemas are cold and draughty places, there will be someone else to say that they are airless and overheated. The industry can't do much about this. Nor can they assist the woman who has "a secret longing to see an X film." But "I might be a bit embarrassed if anyone I knew saw me watching it. I know that my neighbour goes a lot to see X films, and sometimes the next day she'll tell me who she saw there and say, 'Trust them to go and see a picture like that'."

English puritanism, here raising its redoubtable head, turns up in other places as well. Most people spend little on their film-going (less than six shillings a head average, including incidental expenses); most go straight home after the show; many fight off the lure of the refreshment tray inside the cinema. The impression is confirmed that we take our pleasures sadly—or at least seriously. There is a magnificently English rationalisation in the quotation from a motor fitter, aged thirty: "I think you should see the second feature, because if you've seen one main feature and it wasn't particularly good, and you see the second feature and it's even worse, then it makes the first one seem a little better."

The survey is concerned, to a quite considerable extent, with questions of satisfaction—in terms of value for

money, but also of how far people setting out for the cinema expected to enjoy themselves, and how far they actually did. Predictably, the questioners found that people were most satisfied if they had a fair idea before going into the cinema of what they were likely to see. About a third chose the last film they saw for its stars, and a further thirty per cent for its story. Only a bold one per cent went because of interest in "the director, producer or author." Here, clearly, is plenty of support for type-casting ("What I found horrible was James Cagney. After years of being a good gangster, then he did dancing parts. I walked out"). And the survey is justified in its suggestion that film advertising could afford to be a good deal more plainly informative. (How often is a film sold rather desperately as something that it clearly is not; and how much dissatisfaction may this lead to?) Most of the positive recommendations are of this order: tentative suggestions on tactical points, rather than large strategical issues. Film-going might be made more formal, since "competition . . . will have very little difficulty in further diminishing an audience whose approach is largely casual." Since, as everyone knows, the second feature is used by many people as a way of getting into the main film on time, programming might be more adventurous. Local advertising might be more sharply focused, to catch people at the point of sale. And so on.

It is a salutary experience to read this report, because it suggests that there has been, *au fond*, so little change in people's attitudes. We have now had some experience of teaching about the cinema in schools; we have had the adult education classes; the National Film Theatre and the specialised cinemas; some mildly propagandist operations on television. And it cannot be said that there is a glimmer of this reflected in the hundred-odd pages of a thorough investigation. By a very rough and ready calculation, one might assume that perhaps one Londoner in fifty (say, 20 people out of the sample's 1,000) had come at some stage into the orbit of cinemas like the National Film Theatre or the Academy. But the report, understandably, is not concerned with questions of the minority viewpoint.

What does come through is a strong recognition of how much film-going is a matter of habit ("the trouble is that, once you stop these things, you don't make the effort to start them again . . ."). Another comment: "I think the cinema will die out—in four years, perhaps not as long as that, say a couple of years. Not many people go now, do they? I'll be sorry, in a way, because it's something to do . . ." All the same, this would seem not to be a general view. The positive, and rather surprising, discovery on which the report ends is that twenty-nine per cent of all those questioned, filmgoers or not, would be prepared to see cinemas subsidised through the rates. This was, of course, a purely hypothetical question, which might encounter a different answer if put in hard cash terms. But it confirms a kind of generalised goodwill, which finds its most appealing form in the unsolicited testimonial of a Mr. M, otherwise unidentified: "The cinema is a way of life you can't break."



KEEPING UP WITH THE ANTONIONIS

PENELOPE HOUSTON

THREE OF US HAD BEEN lunching with a visiting American critic. The talk had been amiable and discursive; a lot of ground had been covered. We had reached the coffee stage when he leant reflectively forward across the table with a question. "Do you think that America will ever make really serious movies?" We knew, of course, what he meant; we had all encountered the same question before, in similar circumstances. But it still sounds preposterous: as though a Frenchman, over a glass of Australian burgundy, were to speculate wistfully on whether his own country, given a little time and practice, might one day produce a really drinkable (or, indeed, "serious") wine. What we were in fact being asked, of course, was whether America was likely in the foreseeable future to find directors capable of working at the level of Antonioni or Olmi, Resnais or Truffaut. And to this there is no sure answer, except that she probably isn't, given the circumstances of production; and that perhaps—sacriligious or not—it doesn't matter that much anyway. Leave the movies, we were inclined to say, to Hollywood to get on with: if they can't be serious, let them be good.

A few weeks before this I had been talking to Fred Zinnemann, and much the same point had come up in a rather different context. Mr. Zinnemann is one of the American directors who has been cold-shouldered, if not precisely blackballed, by the *Cahiers* club. Although not a man to resent criticism, I think he is very conscious of it, and of the cold inflexibility implied by a *politique des auteurs*. An unfashionable choice of subjects, an unfashionably explicit style, and the film-maker must feel that he is up against a critical court which has prejudged his work, and whose verdict admits of no appeal because it also admits of so little common ground. We had been talking generally about critical barriers, about the romantic European view of America, and the American view of Europe. Out of this came a question, although he didn't put it in quite so elementary a form: "What have they (the Europeans) got that we (the Americans) haven't?"

Challenged for a snap answer, I found only one to fall back

ABOVE: PETER FINCH AND ANNE BANCROFT IN "THE PUMPKIN EATER".

on: that the fundamental difference, the thing which has helped to release European cinema and which still, on the level at which we were talking, holds Hollywood back, has to do with attitudes to the audience. There are moments (*Citizen Kane* was one of them) when Hollywood has leapt light years ahead of its public; moments when the mass entertainment industry has dropped its guard and let through films (Renoir's *Diary of a Chambermaid*, for instance) out of another world. But in general, and for very good reasons, the essence of a showman's cinema has been that it should be explicit and tolerably direct, that it should not run the risk of alienating its audience by perplexing them. What makes Hitchcock a superb film-maker, from the Hollywood point of view, is his quite unambiguous and direct relationship with his public: when Hitch says scream, we all scream. (What makes Hitchcock a superb film-maker, from the *Cahiers* point of view, is the ambiguities and indirections detectable in his work; but that is neither here nor there.)

* * *

One tends to forget just how dependent the cinema has always been on basic conventions, and to treat as perfected a language which is still gradually evolving. Until quite recently, for instance, there were established rules for the opening of a flashback. If the actor did not stand peering hazily out of the frame (preferably with the sound track accompaniment: "And then I remembered how it all began: that long ago afternoon when . . ."); if the screen did not mistily deliquesce into the underwater effect appropriate to memory, then it was assumed that no one in the audience would have any idea of what was going on. It is only lately that the cinema has begun to cope with its inherent disadvantage, as a narrative form without an effective past tense. And the problem of finding an acceptable equivalent to the novel's first person narrative, without *Lady in the Lake* camera trickery, has still hardly been confronted.

The point about conventions is that they work: they clear the ground for effective story-telling. But one thing that Godard and Truffaut, and for that matter Antonioni, have in common is that they started out as critics; a fact which may or may not have anything to do with the quality of their films, but which possibly explains a special fascination with the way effects are manipulated, and a reluctance to take the standard short cut. Critics may become bad film-makers, but they don't as a rule become bad conventional film-makers. Truffaut can talk about his films as circus shows; Godard dedicate his to American B-picture companies. But when film-makers operating at this intensely sophisticated level of self-awareness take over the stuff of popular entertainment fantasy, they cannot but approach it at an angle so oblique that the convention is never confronted head on. The raw, basic thing—the gangster killing, the mock heroic gesture—is there, all right; but no longer in a form which the makers of Monogram pictures, or their audience, would recognise.

Take a film like Godard's *Le Mépris*, which is saturated with its director's feeling for the popular cinema, and which takes over, in its casting, stars from two of its most potent worlds: the international sex symbol (Bardot) and the all-American tough (Palace). Yet I do not believe that Godard could have made a really popular film out of this, however hard he tried, because at the points where it really matters his instincts for the oblique and the elliptical take over, leaving loopholes for the audience's attention to drain away. There is the brilliant, off-key use made of the girl (Georgia Moll) whose only real function is to interpret between the Americans and the Europeans, who hardly speaks a line of dialogue in her own right, and yet who fills a role essential to the film. There is the long sequence of nagging dialogue between Bardot and Michel Piccoli, when the camera continually slides away from the actors to take in a brilliantly coloured sofa, a dangling bath towel. At one point, when the couple are sitting on either side of a table, the camera loiters backwards and forwards

across the lampshade between them, an insolently detached observer.

No practised Hollywood craftsman would (or perhaps even could) make a film like this: his entire conditioning would rise up against its demands, just as it would in the driver of a family Ford put suddenly behind the wheel of a Grand Prix Ferrari. The jump cut was hardly likely to be a Hollywood innovation, because it jolts the audience out of the smooth and accepted rhythm of an action: it confounds their logic. Give an Antonioni film to a Hollywood editor, and one would expect him instinctively to tighten up the ends of the shots—all those key moments when Antonioni goes on following his characters "after everything has been said." Set the same editor loose on, say, the first half-dozen shots of *Muriel*, which must break just about every rule on how to introduce a situation and character, or on the opening scenes of *I Fidanziati*, with their intuitive continuity of mood, and his temptation would be to try to straighten everything out, to restore the image shattered into fragments, or to reconstruct the disorderly time sequence.

This would be less a case of vandalism than of common-sense, a headline writer's paraphrase of a Nabokov conundrum. The rooted tradition of craftsmanship in a commercial industry must work towards clarity, and the audience must be guided rather than stampeded. Half a dozen or so European film-makers (one ought to remember just how few they really are) managed abruptly to jump barriers which it would have taken Hollywood years to overcome. This is not to say that commercial cinema would not get there in the end: its techniques undergo constant refinement, just as audience perceptions advance gradually from the child's first need for steady reassurance as to which are the good and which the bad men. Nor is it to say that ambiguous film-making cannot be widely popular. Of course it can: techniques which on the surface seem likely to alienate may be taken by the public in their stride, or may be balanced out by all sorts of compensating factors. Audiences are never as conscious as film-makers might like to imagine of the actual way films are made, and they are likely to find ambiguities of plot and motive altogether more unsettling than ambiguities of style.

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Hollywood's strength used to be its ignorance: it simply did not know or care what was going on elsewhere, and its own invincible professionalism armoured it against all challenges. But in the last decade Hollywood has come to Europe, to make some disconcerting discoveries. Through both the English-speaking cinemas, British and American, runs a faint but persistent shiver of envy, a feeling that somewhere or other a smart party is going on to which they have not been invited. The British can take it more easily: we are used to being put in our cultural place by the Continent, and our cinema in any case is becoming more rather than less competitive. But the Americans are in the cruel position of the woman in the Thurber cartoon who was told that her trouble was not that she had an inferiority complex but that she was inferior. If Hollywood had been doing well on its own terms during the last few years, one can't imagine that its critics and creators would be bothering so much about the European example. The sad fact, however, is that a fair amount of commercial revitalisation (bolstered, of course, by the big circus shows which are doing their best to remind Hollywood of its fairground beginnings) has not been matched by any return of the movie-maker's zest.

Last year the American critics were almost nostalgically grateful that at least they had *Hud* to write about: a return to the grass-roots, an authentically American movie, a film about Texas, and cattle, and the battles between the generations. This year, up till the time of writing, there has been . . . what? The ingenious suspense mechanisms of *Seven Days in May*, or the accomplished fun of *Charade*, or the *déjà vu* antics of *Marnie*. Even *Cahiers du Cinéma*, second to none in their

loyalty to everything Hollywood stands for, have been chary about finding new American directors to honour, now that the old Hitchcock-Hawks axis is beginning to creak a little with the years. *Hommages* to the great and ageing names are merely a form of that marking time to which, one way or another, we all seem to be reduced. And if one does set the most recent work of the *Cahiers* club (*Marnie*, *The Cardinal*, *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*, *Man's Favourite Sport*?) against films by directors outside or on the fringes of that charmed circle (*Hud*, *Seven Days in May*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *The Best Man*) the battle-flag of the *politique des auteurs* looks sadly tattered, an honourable relic of past glories rather than a campaign standard.

When our American critic asked about "real movies", he was challenged by a wicked and frivolous chorus of "What about *Dead Image*?" Of course this preposterously nostalgic movie is simply a showcase for Bette Davis; and the fact that she has such extravagant fun with her dual role, skipping between seedy poverty on the wrong side of the tracks and upholstered grief in the mansion with the butler and the Great Dane and the private chapel, can be read as evidence of talent running to waste rather than talent fulfilled. The fact remains that a mixture of star quality, professionalism and a kind of zestful lunacy is too integral a part of Hollywood to be thrown on the scrap heap. It probably won't come again. The news that Crawford, Davis, Astor and Moorehead are assembling for the Hollywood equivalent of an old-school reunion in *Hush . . . Hush*, *Sweet Charlotte* wakens some splendid echoes. Ungenerous though it may be to suggest it, a reunion in thirty years time of Sandra Dee, Hayley Mills, "Tippi" Hedren and Carroll Baker seems unlikely to carry quite the same charge.

No one, however, would choose to live to this extent in the past if there were rather more active competition from the present. But the ability to keep the entertainment machine running depends on all sorts of tricks for which Hollywood has lately lost the knack. While they worked they were hardly

thought of as tricks; and now that they no longer work they look pitifully brazen, as though everyone in the audience at a children's party knew perfectly well that the amateur conjuror could never get the rabbit into the hat, much less out of it. Nor does the baleful influence of the *auteur* theory, or the critical gaze wistfully directed towards Europe, give much help to film-makers who are trying on more modestly realistic terms to re-establish Hollywood's position as an entertainment centre. Directors who don't fit in with *auteur* notions find themselves left out in the cold by one faction. Other critics, scanning the horizons for a Truffaut or an Antonioni, are likely to welcome with chilling disinterest the flippant thriller like Mark Robson's *The Prize*, or the amiable fooling of Jerry Lewis' *The Nutty Professor*, or Roger Corman's elegant arabesques of horror. The cultivated people on the staff of Warner Brothers met reproachfully the discovery that we preferred the Gothic folly of *Dead Image* to the Victorian solemnity of Kazan's *America, America*. Entertainment for its own sake is devalued; films like *David and Lisa* and *One Potato, Two Potato* win the salutes paid to amateurism at a time when professionalism is out of favour. Carried away by the heady airs of France, reliable directors like Richard Quine perpetrate absurdities such as *Paris When It Sizzles*, Hollywood's homage to their idea of their audience's idea of the New Wave.

Given a power vacuum at the centre, movements will always start up on the fringes in an effort to fill it—movements as inevitable, in the present American context, as the one which promotes itself under the title of the New American Cinema. With the example of Hollywood professionalism always there to react against, and with the native instinct for going the whole hog, it seems logical that any American cinema of experiment and protest must be more obstinately cranky, more defiantly censorable, and more wholeheartedly obscure than anything of which any other country is likely to be capable. If European directors like to find room for the occasional private joke, then the Americans will retaliate with

FOREVER HOLLYWOOD, JOSEPH COTTEN, BETTE DAVIS, ROBERT ALDRICH AND JOAN CRAWFORD DISCUSS "HUSH . . . HUSH, SWEET CHARLOTTE".





ANTONIONI STREET SCENE: MONICA VITTI AND RICHARD HARRIS IN "THE RED DESERT".

a film like *Hallelujah the Hills*, which is all private jokes. And never, until one saw this film, had one realised that spontaneous fooling could look so much like gruelling hard work.

The New American Cinema would seem to me—on, it must be admitted, a less than exhaustive acquaintance—to have two trademark shots. One is of a dark, mournful girl gazing in a vaguely accusing way from the screen, while the actress, or her disembodied voice, comments on the awfulness of existence in a world which contains anything from the hydrogen bomb to a sad city street by night. The second shot (one perhaps needs to see *Goldstein* to experience it to the full) is of a young man running, for as long as his legs hold out, while a camera car paces him. These marathon runs can handily express almost anything, from escape (positive) to flight (negative), from the isolation of the individual to his sense of intolerable pressures. But when the boy stops running and the girl stops staring, they can meet only on one ground—they can meet, that is to say, only to celebrate the most deadly cliché in the whole of contemporary cinema: Failure of Communication.

* * *

Here, indeed, we are in Antonioni country: or would be, if this really were Antonioni's whole theme, and if his characters were indeed engaged, like so many of their imitators, in sending out coded S.O.S. messages to each other, while simultaneously turning to fire on their rescuers. Failure of communication, in the sense of the old internecine warfare between the generations (*Rebel Without a Cause*, etc.) almost got its screen start in Hollywood. Europe brought it back to America. And it has been a theme so cheapened and worn thin by over-use that it took Antonioni to make it viable again. He makes it work, of course, by concentrating not on the failure but on the effort: his people are much too involved in the business of trying to communicate to see the impossibility (if indeed it is an impossibility, which I rather think Antonioni would doubt) of what they are trying to do. His themes are too closely bound up in a human context to stand up in their own right as intellectual abstractions. But it is the abstraction, all the same, that gets copied: the idea of a kind of existential misery.

Influences among film-makers, of course, operate in a variety of ways. There is the more or less unabashed pillaging

of ideas and effects—usually the work, oddly enough, of directors who seem to have a stronger critical than creative sense, so that they can see theoretically what should and could be done, without being able to find an appropriate context in their own style. There are the moments in films when one director makes an engaging nod to another (or to himself, like the exquisite reference to *Lola* and the arcades of Nantes in *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*). And there are the surrenders, more or less deliberate, or very likely not deliberate at all, to influences which may operate as no more than a feeling in the air. On the whole, what the French directors have given to their followers are the techniques and dodges: jump cuts, frozen shots, speeded up and slowed down motion, ellipses in cutting. When a film made in an entirely conventional and even theatrical tradition, such as George Roy Hill's *The World of Henry Orient*, suddenly swings into a running sequence (of course) done in elegant slow motion, one assumes that the influence—if, indeed, it isn't here too tenuous to be called an influence at all—is working like this. But in terms of themes and ideas the French cinema has been difficult to pin down. Godard and Truffaut are too idiosyncratic, and too involved in explorations on their own account, to invite imitation; and although Resnais' time-and-memory offers a wonderfully rich vein to the persistent quarrier, it is neither immediately accessible nor alluring.

Antonioni's world is both. It is accessible because his themes *look* simple, even if they are not; and it is alluring because it comes to terms with so much of the apparatus of contemporary living. A film-maker who actually likes white Alfa Romeos, abstract painting, pre-cast concrete, white walls, who is ferociously and unremittingly inquisitive about the books his characters are reading and the small talk they exchange, will attract the conscious admiration of directors who stick an abstract on the wall and think they have created a modern interior. And, of course, there is nothing more alluring than a persistent melancholy. But perhaps Antonioni's greatest gift as a film-maker is his hypersensitive feeling about places, and the part landscape plays in mood. Since it is here that others most persistently try to follow him, perhaps it is worth a slight digression.

Landscape as an extension of personality: that has become the critical cliché. In general, and as practised by most of Antonioni's followers, this means no more than that an actor will be set to walk through a vaguely depressing landscape (back to the wasteland, or the city canyons, or the sunless beach) in the hope that some of the effect will rub off. On the whole, this has been found not to work; though it has led, by the way, to any amount of dismal perambulating. But Antonioni himself is much more concerned to let the place assume its colour from the person, to project emotion on to a setting rather than to leave the landscape itself to do the work. Sequences of happiness (the lyrical calm of Verona airport in *The Eclipse*; the jubilation of the bell-tower in *L'Avventura*) arise of their own accord: if the setting seems made for happiness, it is because it crystallises a moment snatched out of time, a sudden diversion into an enchanted backwater. And the setting that seems designed for melancholy—the streets through which Lidia walks in *La Notte*, or the beach of *Le Amiche*—is not really, or necessarily, to be thought of as a place of gloom in its own right. In Astruc's *La Proie pour L'Ombre*, a film which paid fairly obvious tribute to Antonioni, there was a clear implication that we were supposed to see the heroine as a pale little flesh and blood creature against a stark concrete-and-glass wall. With Antonioni himself such easy antitheses cannot be drawn: his judgments are tentative and provisional, and his landscapes in consequence remain forever fluid. The suggestion is that a place—like the famous street corner of *The Eclipse*—takes its emotional colour from the feelings experienced there.

To follow this style effectively, one would have to share Antonioni's ability to combine subjective and objective

impressions: not just to set the figure in the landscape, but to construct the landscape around the figure. The most accessible and imitable world in contemporary cinema comes to seem, the closer one approaches it, one of the most firmly barred against outsiders. Much easier, really, to take over a few scraps of technique, a few hazy annotations of style, from the French directors than to try to find a footing in this shifting landscape. All the same, no modern film-maker has been more copied: from South America to Eastern Europe, the Antonioni Scene has become a convention in its own right.

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It is too easy, of course, to think in terms of conscious imitation. Film-makers seldom set out deliberately to work in the manner of other people; and it is only the critic, happily recording after the event, who can spot the influences that those more closely engaged were probably unaware of at the time. But the fact remains that a handful of film-makers on the Continent have left a trail of dissatisfaction and unease in their wake, because their work has had the effect of making the old-fashioned, well-made film look its years. Heaven knows, a good movie, whether serious or otherwise, does not have to follow a continental style. If the American cinema is currently under an eclipse, it is not one of Antonioni's making. But as long as the English-speaking cinemas produce so few innovators on their own account, and are so short on that feeling of excited astonishment which is one of the most transitory but also one of the most powerful of our responses to art, then the Continent will hold on to its lead.

England is a good deal more susceptible than America to such influences, and it is British directors who have tried most resolutely to demonstrate that anything France can do we can do better. Long after it lost any meaning it ever had, the term *nouvelle vague* (or, showing a fine disregard for alien usage, *nouveau vague*) crops up everywhere, as a standard synonym for anything that is casual, inconsequential, or in the vaguest sense up-to-the-minute. *A Hard Day's Night*, on these terms, becomes "a very *nouvelle vague* film." Britain can hand-hold her cameras with the best of them. And it seems on the cards that the kind of stylistic influences apparent in *Tom Jones* will make their own indirect entry to Hollywood, like a ship of the French Line calling in at Southampton on its way to New York. Recent British film-making has assimilated a good deal from across the Channel; and when the influences actually seem to work, as in the exuberant introduction to Julie Christie in *Billy Liar*, they can refresh and lighten the whole tempo of a picture.

This, however, is merely a glancing reference, a sudden shift of idiom for a particular purpose. It is different with a film like *Night Must Fall*, where one feels that a great deal of theoretical rather than practical intelligence went into the problem of how to reconstruct an old warhorse of a stage melodrama to make it work in the modern anti-narrative idiom. And one can only wish that in fact it did work; that Emlyn Williams' play did not keep obstinately pushing its way to the surface, calling out for attention as relentlessly and obstreperously as the head in the hatbox itself. There are moments in *Night Must Fall* when Susan Hampshire takes on an unnerving look of Monica Vitti, and moments when the thread of a mood snaps so abruptly (the cut into the scene of scooter and car on the lawn) that one feels the shade of Truffaut at the director's shoulder. I would not suggest that Karel Reisz consciously copied anyone: merely that he cannot but find himself thinking in a European idiom, however devastating the results may look in a context of old English melodramatics.

Rather the same thing would seem to apply in the case of Jack Clayton's *The Pumpkin Eater*, a film less significant in its own right, perhaps, than in the kind of reactions it has aroused. Columbia can hardly find room on their advertisement, where Anne Bancroft stares so dolefully out of a discreet band of black, for the endorsements of critics who have hailed

it as the film of the year. And in one sense—though not, I think, their sense—they are probably right. Clayton inaugurated the whole British back-to-the-provinces movement with *Room at the Top*; and in *The Pumpkin Eater* I suspect that he is showing the same freakish instinct for the mood of the times. Probably with no more deliberate intention on his part, he would seem here to be ratifying the British cinema's *entente* with Europe. *The Pumpkin Eater* is a film overwhelmingly conscious of its own style. It defies you not to notice the care with which it is made. It is, as one woman said crossly to Clayton after the press show, "irritatingly flawless". And its style, to me, is amorously that of the European film, mid-sixties vintage.

The film has for its background a novel recorded in a series of glancing episodes, out of the wounded sensibility of a woman who has been betrayed by her own demands on life. With her clutter of children, her many marriages, her vagueness about the outside world and her intense awareness of her own vulnerability, she is a heroine (like the woman in *Hiroshima mon Amour*) who demands to be taken at her own emotional valuation. She insists on becoming the "I" of a first-person narrative; and the fact that the film is bound to deny her this role creates its own problems. Clayton and Harold Pinter come nearest to solving these in the early sequences, where the flashback structure ensures that we see events as filtered through a single sensibility. Later, in the encounters between Jo Armitage and her older children, the view of her becomes objective to the point of criticism (not self-criticism, it should be noted); and the effect is one of emotional dislocation, a jarring shift of viewpoint.

The structure of linked flashbacks (including the best thing in the film: the superbly inconclusive episodes with Maggie Smith's wickedly well-played Philpot) culminates in the scene of nervous breakdown at Harrods. As an idea, this is brilliant: it fulfils the Antonioni function (even if Clayton might not see it in these terms) of isolating the heroine in a world arrogantly preoccupied with its own affairs; it can draw on that sense of dithering inadequacy which big shops, at the best of times, are inclined to bring out in their customers; it gives every chance for visual effect. Since the film's first showing at Cannes, this sequence has been tightened by discreet cutting. But it still doesn't quite work; and the things

"A HARD DAY'S NIGHT".



that go wrong with it perhaps illuminate the extreme difficulty of sustaining an introspective style in which everything depends on the precision of the images.

To begin with, Clayton allows the mood to be jarred by one purely subjective shot, in which Jo stares down at her own feet as she walks. Not difficult to manage (the camera must have been strapped to the actress's chest), but just difficult enough for us to become more aware than we ought to be at this point of the mechanics of the shot. And there are rather too many blank stares, mournful reflections in mirrors (the film is always very mirror-conscious), held shots of objects which ought in some way to carry significance for Jo, even if only to distract, but which simply look like the bric-à-brac of a big store, unrelated to anything but themselves. Lidia's walk in *La Notte* is not my favourite Antonioni sequence, but the mood it sustains is one of total concentration and inevitability. This Harrods sequence, by contrast, lacks the essential fatalism: Jo, one feels, could just as well have broken down while crouching in the corner of her garage at home. Harrods simply makes a better, or more dramatically engaging, setting.

Style, carried to such conscious lengths, chills the heart of the film. And it is style operating on two distinct planes: the deliberation of the direction, with its slow, staring, circling emphasis; and those barbed wire entanglements raised by the Pinter script, such as the party sequence or the lethally neurotic meeting under the hair driers. Pinter's dialogue holds one absolutely accurate echo of Noel Coward—the "lots of sand in Morocco" comment so flatly interjected at the party.

"THE PUMPKIN EATER". ANNE BANCROFT.



This comes out of a world of mannered boredom which is somehow not quite that of the film. And there are much more jarring lapses in the direction, such as the close-up shots of James Mason's mouth spitting out venomous cruelties, in the scene of tea at the zoo. This opens devastatingly, with Mason's cosy inspection of the menu and the waitress's impeccable disinterest. But again the setting is merely a prop, dropped at the moment when its quiet incongruities might have become most useful in favour of the over-stated close-up. So the film builds up: the slowly circling camera tour around a room; the discreetly frozen shot; even the sound track, in which every sound comes across as distinct from every other sound, in that clinical Swedish manner. It is a long time since a British film has given the impression of quite such deliberation. And it was, after all, Antonioni who answered one sceptical questioner by saying that he didn't see why directors *should* be expected to sustain the affectation that their effects are achieved without planning.

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They wouldn't have made *The Pumpkin Eater* in America: Hollywood tradition would have flinched away from its undefined attitudes to its characters, its air of being a "woman's picture" which has formed an uneasy alliance with the world of subtitled sex. And I don't believe the film would, or could, have been made in England a few years ago, not because of its subject, which is more bizarre than conventionally daring, but because to carry it off at all in this style demands a feeling for introspection and for the power of setting which has crept into English film-making by way of the Continent. Yet would they have made *The Pumpkin Eater* in France or Italy either? A mark of Antonionism is that the characters are free: one can't quite imagine the Lidas or Vittorias trailing eight children behind them on those sad walks. And whereas a novel can manipulate its scenery, conveniently tidying the children and their accoutrements out of sight when they are not wanted, a film has less ground to manoeuvre. There are moments when one finds oneself asking fatally pragmatic questions, such as how Jo Armitage finds the time for so intense and private an emotional life. Yet the fact that she does yields a final opportunity. If Karel Reisz can somehow contrive a shot in which Susan Hampshire looks like Monica Vitti, so Clayton can discover in Anne Bancroft moments—sitting in the corner of a sofa, thumbing through *Vogue* with the air of a cat waiting to pounce; or wearing her nervous breakdown hat; or arriving by car (French, of course) at a country cemetery—at which she is strikingly reminiscent of Jeanne Moreau.

These are not, one must repeat, conscious echoes: it is simply that the Rome-Paris axis dominates here, as in other spheres of fashion, and that there is a look in actresses, as there is a look in film-making, which at a given moment seems inevitable. When so many critical trumpets sounded for *The Pumpkin Eater*, I can't but believe that the reviewers were surrendering in part to a hunger for conscious 'art'. We haven't, after all, had a great deal of it lately in the English-speaking cinema. Yet 'art', in this sense, is the last thing the *Cahiers* critics and film-makers wanted, and the cause of "really serious movies" is not one they would support. What one would really like to see from Britain or America is a film which recognised that a part of the lesson to be learnt from the Continent is not what they put in but what they leave out. Not the Antonioni landscape, but the moment at the end of *The Eclipse* when all the telephones start to ring in the office, and nothing has happened and everything has happened; not the Truffaut run to the sea, but the car so pointlessly yet precisely turning circles in *Jules et Jim*; not the frozen groupings of *Marienbad*, but the unexplained arrival at the end of *Muriel*. . . . Of course, it is asking a lot to expect film-makers to be influenced by what isn't there; but then, it's the intangible, incalculable, and from the critical point of view indescribable X-factor that makes art more interesting as a pursuit than snakes-and-ladders.

IN THE PICTURE

The Moment of Truth

FROM MARCH UNTIL THE end of July this year Francesco Rosi was in Spain making a film that is to be called *The Moment of Truth*. The subject is Spain; and indeed on the clapper board was written simply *Spagna* as an Italian working title. The film was born in the summer of 1963, when Rosi went to Pamplona with Gianni Di Venanzo to shoot some material on the San Fermin fiesta. Rosi knew that he wanted to use the *corrida* as a symbol of Spain today, but he wasn't sure then whether he would shoot in the *cinéma vérité* manner or build it round a story line. He went backwards and forwards between Rome and Spain during the next six months, and in the spring was at Seville, again with Di Venanzo at his side (working in colour for the first time) to shoot the Easter Week festivities. He shot 10,000 metres of film and will use only 250 metres of it for the opening sequence—to "set the mood" of the Spanish mixture of paganism and fanatical Christianity.

As Rosi continued shooting and the bullfighting season got into full swing, his film began to develop a definite story line, prompted to a great extent by the personality and character of the matador he has chosen to play the lead. His name is Miguel Monoel, but throughout Spain he is known as Miguelin; he was the Number One until the advent last year of El Cordobes, the handsome youngster from Cordoba who has ousted Miguelin and everyone else from the bullfighting popularity polls. The story of Rosi's film is not the true story of Miguel's life; the early part, showing the evolution of the matador, and his decision that the bull is a better enemy than hunger and misery, is Rosi's invention, though one can imagine how true it is of many young Spaniards today. But the greater part of the film shows Miguel in the arena alone with the bull. At the end he too is killed.

What will be fascinating is to see how Rosi succeeds in combining the very simple, even obvious, elements of his story with the real bullfighting material. Some criticism raised of his last two films was that he didn't touch on the psychology of his characters. Nowadays even the Marxists think that the roots of behaviour are to be found in one's family origins, even if they are conditioned by economic environment. Rosi isn't sure that he agrees. And he is not a Marxist, or even a Communist (contrary to what many people imagine). He knows that many filmgoers would like to have found out more about Giuliano the man. When I was in London last year with Rosi we went one Sunday to eat at a restaurant in Maidenhead. When our Sicilian waiter learned that the gentleman was the director of the film about Giuliano he commented in his native dialect: "I didn't see the film about Giuliano, but I did see the one about his cousin Pisciotta." The boy had in fact seen *The Dreaded Mafia* (as *Salvatore Giuliano* was called on its second release in London) and hadn't realised that the film was indeed the one "about" Giuliano. For the Sicilians (and some others?) the film should have given us a more colourful portrait of Giuliano in his relations with people.

Of course Rosi isn't interested in that type of cinema. He didn't care whether Giuliano had a crisis of conscience after the Portella May Day massacre, any more than it interested



BULLET THROUGH A WINDSCREEN IN "THE RIFLES".

him in *Mani sulla Città* whether the corrupt building magnate had qualms about letting his own son go to gaol so that he himself could save face politically. Says Rosi: "It doesn't concern me whether Giuliano or Nottola were sorry for themselves or not. What interests me passionately is how a character behaves in relation to the collectivity of society. I'm not making a study of character but of society. To understand what a man is like in his private drama you must begin to understand him in his public life."

Rosi objects strongly when someone suggests that he is putting content before form. "I am aiming at a style, call it an aesthetic if you like, in which there's no difference between form and content. The important thing for me is not to make it aesthetic." If there are beautiful things in his films it is because Rosi has a great cinematic eye. Those who spend their lives trying to convince me that Nicholas Ray makes great films should recall the scene after the Portella massacre when the camera pans across the landscape as the bandits gallop away in the distance; or the sequence in Nottola's office at the top of a skyscraper overlooking Naples when he is left alone at night to brood upon his ambition.

The question that often follows on this one is: "Are you making documentary, then?" But Rosi is adamant. "I hate documentary. I interpret reality in a way that has only the aspect of documentary. But I haven't *invented* anything in this Spanish film. I have merely taken real events and interpreted them according to my own feelings. At the basis of every film of mine there is an enquiry—the Mafia in Sicily, building corruption in Naples, the Italian worker emigrating to Germany (*I Magliari*). I study the question as if I were a journalist who had to write a series of articles. I've done the same with Spain. The reality that I have reconstructed must *seem* like documentary. I don't want the public to know what is real and what is reconstructed."

JOHN FRANCIS LANE

Festivals and a Revolution

GUY PLAYFAIR writes: Rio's Governor Carlos Lacerda sat in his private cinema during the April revolution watching a series of films as he directed the defence of his palace. One of them was *Seven Days in May*, whose trailer had been shown in Rio cinemas the week before, even as the tanks started to move in. The film has yet to be shown. Yet this is an isolated instance; Brazil's present rulers, after their initial burst of spy-hunting, have not imposed any artistic censorship. The press remains as outspoken as ever, and any government move to restrict freedom of expression is promptly denounced, to show that it still exists. Glauber Rocha's *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* was shown on the country's largest circuit after its appearance at Cannes. And another film with a strong anti-military slant, Ruy Guerra's *Os Fuzis* (*The Rifles*) was sent to the

Berlin Festival, where it won a critics' prize. Eagerly awaited is Roberto Farias' 'interior' film *Selva Trágica* (*The Tragic Jungle*) which is unlikely to be free from sharp social criticism.

Brazil has certainly had a good year for festival successes, and indeed it sometimes seems that too many people are making exclusively 'festival films'—determined to show that they too can hand-hold their cameras for a five-minute take in near-total darkness. Strangely enough, these lapses of technique are not signs of immaturity in the Brazilian cinema, which reached the top with *O Cangaceiro*, still the best-ever Brazilian bandit-type film, fifteen years ago. They suggest that younger directors are so anxious to reject the old custard-pie *chanchada*, the samba-and-mother-in-law type of film that once dominated Latin-American cinema, that they find themselves rejecting the technical considerations as well. But the gap is being filled by two of the older directors—Anselmo Duarte and Roberto Farias, the latter an experienced *chanchada* director and the former a veteran romantic actor who learnt his skill from the other side of the camera.

Brazil desperately needs festival successes to help its film industry. A Brazilian film cannot hope to make a fair profit unless it is sold abroad. The first real breakthrough was Camus's *Orfeu Negro* (known here as *Orfeu do Carnaval*). Though widely criticised for showing an untypical slice of Rio life, the film showed everybody just what possibilities Brazil had in the co-production field, and many more followed, mostly American, French or Italian, and most of them terrible. For although Brazil is regularly rediscovered by foreign directors, many of them get no further than the Copacabana Palace Hotel or the Sugar Loaf mountain, while many more persist in perpetuating the savage Indian myth, leaving out everything in between. A succession of Teutonic blondes have come over to play jungle goddesses and queens of the Amazon, and they keep on coming. (The latest Amazon effort was shot a few miles from Rio, about 2,000 miles from the Amazon.)

On the brighter side, there was Philippe de Broca's *L'Homme de Rio*, which left a much-needed feeling of hilarity—needed to counteract the prevailing seriousness in the new generation of directors, too few of whom dare attempt comedy for fear of slipping back into the *chanchadas* they try so hard to forget. Brazil remains wary of co-productions: such films, it is felt, only maintain a stereotyped view of the people. But if foreign directors have been unenlightened in their choice of material, few Brazilian directors have done better until lately. Farias took a step forward with *O Assalto ao Trem Pagador* (*The Train Robbers*), which shows him working patiently in his chosen field to create a semi-documentary and strongly critical style. Since *O Assalto*, there have been signs of a useful trend towards social realism in entertainment films. The

police came in for bitter treatment in Roberto Pires's *Crime no Sacopã* (*The Sacopã Street Crime*), not only based on a recent sensational murder, but starring the chief suspect himself in the leading role. And the trend continues in books—Brazil's two biggest ever sellers are Carolina Maria's *Child of the Dark* and Adelaide Carraro's *The Governor and I*—two examples of a scathing attack on society on a low and high level.

One problem for the industry is an unusual one—it is becoming too easy to make films. A feature can be made for as little as £2,000, and backers are easy to find. One of Brazil's biggest banks is a regular film patron, and private backers abound. They nearly always get their money back, sometimes within a week. This situation leads to films being made in a hurry, without enough thought or care. Too many young directors plunge into feature making after a couple of years as boom boy or even clapper board operator. You could find thirty men willing to direct a film in Brazil today, but far fewer willing and qualified to direct production or to supervise a wardrobe or to edit the sound track.

Another serious problem is difficulty in getting hold of film stock. Not yet made in Brazil, it has to be bought by devious methods, often on the black market. Most recent Brazilian films would have been improved by far tighter cutting, but after all the trouble and expense you go through to get hold of a can of film in Brazil, you are reluctant to throw any of it into the dustbin. There is strong pressure at the moment to set up a national industry to make film stock, but still no sign of it taking place.

Yet in spite of all the problems, a revolution has taken place. Brazilians are convinced that every problem has a 'Brazilian solution'. In spite of lack of public interest in national films, they keep on making them, occasionally turning out a really good one. And when they have their own film stock, better equipment and more qualified technicians, they will make many more good ones. Festival awards alone are not enough, as Anselmo Duarte found when he took nearly two years to sell *The Promise* in the U.S.A. He was especially disappointed when President Kennedy refused to allow his opinion of the film ("a masterpiece") to be used in publicity. Duarte tried to persuade him that by selling his film he would be doing more for an undeveloped country than by pumping dollars into its economy. "If I don't sell my film I shall be poor again and have to ask for your dried milk," Duarte said. Luckily the film was sold—the first Brazilian film to get major circuit booking in the U.S.A.

Yanks Go Home

FILM FESTIVALS ARE traditionally occasions for scandal: films are always failing to turn up, or being withdrawn for political reasons, or subjected to last minute cutting in the projection box. In the case of Venice this year, however, the scandal preceded the festival, when the Americans early in August announced their official withdrawal, on the grounds that "statements widely publicised in the Italian press reported that the Venice festival organising committee was not satisfied with the American official entry." This was to have been Robert Rossen's *Lilith*, starring Jean Seberg (as a patient in a mental home) and Warren Beatty. According to *Variety*: "the theme of the film has, purportedly, to do with various forms of sexual obsession, but this has not been sufficient reason for rejecting an entry to Venice in the past..." In fact, the story reported in at least two Italian left-wing dailies was that *Lilith* had "created many uncertainties in the pre-selection committee," and that the festival director, Luigi Chiarini, had suggested that the Americans might substitute another film. Dr. Chiarini denied responsibility for any leak to the press, and said that any dissension had been on grounds of artistic taste, not moral outrage. But the Americans (who had entered *Lilith*, Rossen said, "because we thought we had an excellent chance of winning") felt that their film had been prejudged and withdrew both their entry and their official delegation.

This is not just a storm in a Venetian teacup. Festivals need American films, American official participation and the publicity draw of American stars. But Rossen is probably voicing a widespread American resentment when he comments that: "Chiarini is typical of the new cult of snobs who feel that films should be made only for their tastes, ignoring the masses who in fact support the entire motion picture business on a world wide basis." He added that the American withdrawal had "created consternation in Italian film circles and might spell finish to the 'tyrannical' career of Chiarini." Fighting words; meanwhile, it is the Americans who have gone home.

"LILITH" IN PRODUCTION. JEAN SEBERG, WARREN BEATTY AND (LEFT) ROBERT ROSSEN.



CRISIS



IN ROME

ON THE VERY DAY THAT Premier Moro was to consider the new law relating to the Italian cinema, the dissolution of parliament was announced. The old law expired on June 30th, and from July 1st, consequently, Italian cinema was left without legislative safeguards. A few weeks later, Moro formed his new government, with Corona, the minister responsible for cinema, still at the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment. The Corona law is to be presented to the Council of Ministers, and then to parliament. But the question is, when will there be a full debate? With all the urgent economic problems facing the government, it seems unlikely that anything can happen for a few months. For the meantime, therefore, it has been decided to prolong the life of the old law.

So the basic problems of the Italian cinema still remain to be solved; the crisis drags on, and the general crisis in the economy has only aggravated the industry's old troubles. There were bankruptcies and suspensions of activity; major companies (Titanus for one) were put into the hands of administrators appointed by the banks. The Banca Nazionale del Lavoro put a total block on credit, and the interest rate for private loans soared astronomically. Some months ago, with the hope of avoiding complete paralysis in the industry, bank credit was once more made available up to a specified limit, so that work could start on an agreed number of films. But the

postponement of the new law, which would have provided definite guarantees of credit (particularly helpful to quality productions), has led to more gloom and uncertainty.

Innumerable projects have been abandoned, or shelved until better times. First rank directors, and young film-makers of promise, have been inactive for two, three or even four years. (Vittorio De Seta, for instance, has done nothing since *Banditi a Orgosolo* in 1961; Gillo Pontecorvo nothing since the 1960 *Kapo*.) Others, seeing how the wind was blowing, have turned their hands to projects they might never have touched earlier, like those innumerable sketch films which rely on a successful comedian (Sordi, Gassman, Tognazzi) and a strong element of sex. As a genre, the films meet with fair public support and present few difficulties in actual production. The only costly item in the budget is likely to be the star (the male star as a rule: there are always plenty of pretty girls ready to undress). Among directors who have made films of the type, or are working on them, are Mauro Bolognini, Renato Castellani, Luigi Comencini, Alberto Lattuada, Franco Rossi, Carlo Lizzani.

Other film-makers have not hesitated to adopt Anglo-Saxon pseudonyms and go into the business of horror films and Westerns. Until recently the money lay in the Maciste type of

"THE BIBLE". ADAM (MICHAEL PARKS), EVE (ULLA BERGRYD) AND GIRAFFE.



HUSTON IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

film, or the often rather sordid striptease anthologies, the world tours whose common denominator is always sex. Now the number of film-makers who try to emulate Roger Corman and Terence Fisher is rapidly growing, while others have discovered the possibilities of cheap, home-made Westerns. Mario Bava, whose horror films are distinguished by their elaborate and splendidly gratuitous visual effects, is about to embark on a Western. Recently, I saw one called *Massacro al Grande Canyon*, made as an Italian-American co-production. The producer was an American, Albert Band; the director an apocryphal 'Corbett'; the star a real American, Jim Mitchum. It was a second-hand film, full of well-observed imitations, but in some ways preferable to Hollywood films of the same standard if only because of the loving care that had gone into making the copy. 'Corbett's' film displays a refinement of formal requirements almost amounting to excess.

No one can feel happy that Italian cinema should need to rely on productions like this for its survival. It is hardly surprising that some directors have preferred to go the other way and collaborate with the great enemy—television. Alessandro Blasetti has compiled a six-part TV anthology of our post-war cinema, showing its presentation of Italian people and problems. A labour of love (and talent), this has aroused wide public interest. Ermanno Olmi, whose own production company was among those forced to suspend business, has made an excellent TV documentary on the cult of St. Anthony. Nanni Loy has used *cinéma vérité* techniques in shooting material for a new TV series, about which nothing much is yet known, other than its intention to be 'provocative'.

To tell the truth, the cinema-television relationship is one of the black spots in the situation. Italian television (with two channels) is practically a state monopoly and constitutes formidable competition. It is no longer stealing audiences from the cinema at the rate of a few years ago, when TV quizzes like the famous "Double or Quits?" were all the rage. As has happened in other countries, the film audience has stabilised itself at a lower level. But the fact remains that television dealt a mortal blow, especially to some of the smaller producers. Statistics show that fewer than 20 per cent of all films made in Italy cover their costs in the home market, and the percentage for 'quality' films is of course even smaller. As for overseas sales, there is no export organisation, although

the new law was to have inaugurated one. Often films of box-office potential are sold outright for a comparatively modest sum, so that the big profits go to the international entrepreneurs.

Television might compensate for some of the damage done to the cinema, by commissioning series of telefilms from the film companies to take the place of some of the imported American series. Such a move, at a time of crisis, could be providential for the industry's survival—and in America, of course, this is just how television came to the rescue. But the TV interests assert, not without reason, that this is simply not an economic proposition, since the purchase of American series comes so much cheaper.

A staggering rise in production costs has been one unhappy consequence of the Italian cinema's all too ephemeral boom years. Now a cooperative type of production is favoured, in which a director of standing joins forces with the producer by putting in his work as his share of the capital and taking a percentage of the profits. This is the sort of system on which Francesco Rosi is working for *The Moment of Truth*, a study of the Spanish temperament in terms of the mythology and realities of the bull-ring.

Rosi's film is one of the few of importance which have got under way in recent months, along with *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, the film directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini for which Alfredo Bini has evidently found adequate financial support from Catholic sources. Intelligent producers of moderate means, like Bini (Arco Films), Sansone Chrosicki (Sancro) and Franco Cristaldi (Vides) have managed to keep afloat, though they have had to keep a weather eye on the world market. Bini has a hand in the Spanish biography *El Greco* (star Mel Ferrer; director Luciano Salce), while Vides lent Claudia Cardinale to Bronston for *The Magnificent Showman*. Of the big companies, Titanus remains in a precarious position, though still active as a distribution concern. The only producer who seems to have no real trouble in raising capital is Rizzoli; and he, of course, has his rich publishing empire as well as his film activities. He is backing the new Fellini picture, *Giulietta degli Spiriti*, tailored to Giulietta Masina. As usual with Fellini, a certain amount of mystery surrounds the production, but it is said to make free use of fantasy (and also comedy) in its account of a woman's efforts to win back her husband's love.

Other big producers, such as Dino De Laurentiis and Carlo Ponti, have been for some time involved with American capital. De Laurentiis has been able to start *The Bible*—direction by John Huston; cast luxuriously international; shooting taking place at a whole new studio complex built by De Laurentiis on the Via Pontina. Carlo Ponti, now working closely with Joseph Levine, relies on such box-office certainties as the Loren-Mastroianni team. De Sica's thoroughly mediocre *Ieri, Oggi, Domani* did triumphantly at the box-office, and he has since directed them in *Matrimonio all'Italiana*. (Story: the schemes of an ex-prostitute to make the man she lives with marry her and acknowledge her three children; only one is his, but he tries in vain to discover which.)

One victim of the new situation has been Marco Ferreri. Mr. Levine did not accept his *La Donna Scimmia* (*The Ape Woman*) in the version which was shown at Cannes and throughout France and Italy. In the original, the leading man, left a widower on the death of the ape woman he had married and exploited as a showpiece, sells her corpse to a natural history museum. A few months later, after a great fuss, he gets the body returned to him, but is soon displaying it again, embalmed, in a new showcase. Levine is giving the film world distribution, but the ending will be modified: more conventional and acceptable, less cruel and original. (In Ferreri's work, one ought perhaps to say, the cruelty hides real feeling.) This is not the only setback for Ferreri: his *Uomo dai Cinque Palloni* (*The Man with Five Balloons*) has run into trouble with the Ponti-Levine organisation. The film is about alienation,

though not in the Antonioni style, its protagonist being an industrialist whose obsessions lead to monomania, to insanity, and finally to suicide. I don't find it a successful film, since its own insistence on a single point leads it into monotony. But the basic issue is that it is a *film d'auteur*, and the cavalier attitude of the producers and distributors, who have cut it to sketch length for an episode film, can only be regretted.

There are many difficulties facing ambitious directors—and especially the younger ones. Relations with producers, distributors and exhibitors have hardened since the good times; films suffer from being presented with a marked lack of confidence on the part of those whose job it is to sell them. The education of public taste is slow; only in Milan are there efficient art houses, under the direct patronage of the national union of film journalists. The government has suggested setting up a distribution and cinema circuit, under state administration, with the object of encouraging Italian production. But such arrangements existed until a few years ago, when the distribution end was dismantled and the cinemas sold for a price so inadequate that the scandal has not yet died down. Reconstruction would not be easy. All in all, the problems are innumerable: let us hope that the government will have the staying-power and the strength to tackle them with enlightenment.

GIULIO CESARE CASTELLO

Translated by Margaret Fleisher.

Huston in Eden

"PROMISE YOU," John Huston told me, "*The Bible* will bear no relation at all to the usual biblical film. Other films, de Mille's for instance, have embroidered or distorted—we stick close to the original. Other films have gone for spectacle and violence—we are going for the myth and mystery of Genesis. A lot of it, I hope, will be truly lyrical." And he added, "No, I don't believe in God, but I *am* religious about the Bible as literature." He leaned forward, lazily authoritative and charming as ever. His face was lined and tired; his curly white hair shone in the arc lamps under the hot Roman night. It was impossible not to warm to him, or to hope that this weird, ambitious, un-Hustonian film would, despite the odds, provide him with a new success after his long years of semi-failures.

Beside him on the camera-truck, the bouncy and freckled Ulla Bergryd (Eve), in blue jeans, was chatting to Ava Gardner, just arrived to play Sarah. Bearded Italian extras from Abraham's tribe gathered round, clutching their spears. Horses were cantering everywhere—as in all the best Huston films. We were on location, just south of Rome, where Dino De Laurentiis' much-publicised and much-plagued 13 million dollar epic of Genesis i-xxii is at last, after three years planning, now two-thirds completed. Of course, it has its fair share of the ludicrous aspects of filming any ancient epic. In Eden, the tips of naked Ulla's long blonde wig were glued to her chest when the wind blew. To spare her blushes, the set (a prince's lush garden, near Rome) was barred to the press, with a strong police guard. But that didn't stop Rome's ruthless *paparazzi* (free-lance photographers, immortalised in *La Dolce Vita*) from burrowing or bribing their way in to take sneak pictures which they sold to the foreign press. Then the serpent caused trouble: Huston hired a king cobra, but it just wouldn't act, it kept looking the wrong way, so they sacked it and called for Nureyev to take the part instead. In fact, the animals are this film's biggest headache and biggest budget item. For the Ark scenes, some 300 have been collected in a special zoo near the studio, where they are learning to live together. But they keep getting pregnant. "The public will pay to see those animals, going up that gangway, two by two, and that's what we'll have to give them," said an executive, resignedly. Compared with this, the Sodom scenes (which



HUSTON WITH RICHARD HARRIS, WHO PLAYS CAIN.

Huston will shoot "impressionistically, with depraved faces, and cries and scuffles, and signs of nasty ritual") will be simple stuff.

It would be premature to dismiss this film in advance as bad or silly. It has some creative ideas, and an array of top talent from Stravinsky to O'Toole. This must be set against De Laurentiis' pretensions and dubious taste (remember *Barabbas*?), and the hazardous state of the Italian film industry. Whether the talent and the ideas can win the day will depend largely on that ever unknown quantity: whether the erratic Huston is in creative form this time.

Dino (everyone calls him "Dino") sees this film as the spearhead of his private crusade to set the Italian industry on a par with Hollywood. He conceived the film, in 1961, on a gigantic scale. But since then he has seen the big American distributors (whom he vitally needs) hardening against English-speaking Italian epics. Dino still has no backer for *The Bible*, and has raised the 13 million dollars privately, largely in Swiss banks. In an Italy beset with soaring costs and tight credits, he must be feeling anxious. Columbia, who released *Barabbas*, say they now want quality *Italian* films of the Fellini and Germi type, with Italian voices, even for the U.S. market. They are backing Visconti's new film. "Shall I make it in English, like *The Leopard*?" he asked them. "No," they said, "in Italian."

But *The Bible's* babel will be all English. Having only one director, Huston, helps this. Dino had originally signed up Bresson, Welles and Visconti each to do a 3½-hour episode. But they quarrelled with Christopher Fry's draft script—notably Bresson, who wanted to make an anthropological, evolutionary approach to Adam and Eve, not very box-office in Dino's terms. Huston then saw the script, loved it, and got the whole job.

Fry's script is reverent, conventional, straightforward, stressing the theme of Disobedience that runs through the first part of Genesis. It has the merit of keeping *verbatim* and almost *in toto* the text of the Authorised Version. By far the biggest speaking part will be the narrator and Voice of God—for this, they are still hoping to get Olivier. The script also has some imaginative ideas for lyrical link-passages of montage,

(Continued on page 210)



The two Chambermaids | TOM MILNE



LE JOURNAL D'UNE FEMME DE CHAMBRE ends with a stunning coup de Buñuel after the main action (in which the chambermaid, Célestine, secures the arrest for rape and murder of her brutal lover, the militantly anti-semitic coachman, Joseph) has been concluded. In two swift final sequences, Célestine sells out to bourgeois comfort by marrying the crazy Captain from next door, while Joseph, having got away with his crimes, settles down in his little café in Cherbourg where he happily watches a Fascist demonstration parading the streets. As the demonstrators disappear round the corner, Buñuel lifts his camera from the empty street to a stormy sky, suddenly riven by a flash of lightning as the word "Fin" appears on the screen. Given the fact that the action is set in 1930, this is a brilliantly ominous evocation, not only of the imminent rise of Hitler, but of the reverberations which still smoulder under the surface today.

But it can also be read in another way, as a barbed private joke. For, as the chanting demonstrators file past him, Joseph starts a cry of "Vive Chiappe! Vive Chiappe!" which the demonstrators take up blindly; and Chiappe, of course, was the Prefect of Police who, in 1930, banned *L'Age d'or*. By cutting into and thus speeding up the footage of the "Vive Chiappe-ists" marching away, Buñuel turns them into absurd automata, literally whisks them out of sight, then lifts his camera to call on that avenging blast of lightning. Here Buñuel is at his brilliant best, and yet the sequence leaves one a trifle uneasy, as though someone apparently aiming at a range target had instead killed a passing bird. "Only connect . . ." *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* is a beautiful film, impeccably photographed, impeccably acted, impeccably directed; yet somewhere, its connections grow hazy.

The trouble seems to lie partly in an awkward indecisiveness about the character of Célestine, whose ambiguity tends to shadow the film, and partly in the fact that Octave Mirbeau's novel is almost too tailor-made for Buñuel. Jokingly, when it was announced that he was to make this film—and remembering bizarre details like the skewered goose and slaughtered squirrel from Renoir's version—one said that he was going to have the time of his life. And he has. Buñueliana (mostly culled from Mirbeau) abounds in the film, from the elderly foot fetishist to the lady with the bathroom full of test-tubes and syringes, from the ants crawling over the greenhouse frame to the snails crawling over the murdered child's leg, the butterfly being blown to pieces by a bullet, the absurd priest toddling along the street, or that same slowly and painfully skewered goose. Buñuel himself has remarked à propos of *Viridiana* that he originally intended Don Jaime's son (the character played by Francisco Rabal) to be a dwarf, but changed his mind because people would have said it was "too Buñuel". One's complaint in *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* is not so much that it is too Buñuel, as that most of the Buñueliana is simply superb decoration.

Take the foot fetishism, for instance: played by Jeanne Moreau with a delicious mixture of wide-eyed curiosity and yawning boredom, these scenes are exquisitely funny, but superficial. In Mirbeau, as the old man excitedly watches Célestine lacing up her boots, he cries, "Why don't you walk? Walk a little so I can see them move . . . see them live." Buñuel uses the same dialogue, but shoots the scene primarily for comedy (close-ups of Célestine wobbling along on the high heels), thus missing the suggestion that in the old man's eyes the boots are living things. Consequently the next scene, where the old man is found dead in bed, naked and clutching the

boots, is robbed of most of its disquieting overtones. Both sequences, in fact, tend to be greeted with complaisant amusement by audiences. The opening sequence of *El*, on the other hand, where the camera follows Francisco's fascinated gaze down the row of naked feet while the old priest lovingly washes and kisses them, then moves to a pair of neatly shod feminine feet and up the shapely body of the girl on whom he is to lavish his desperate obsession, inextricably mingles piety and sexual attraction in a single movement of the camera, to evoke the exact sensation of crawling revulsion which Mirbeau was after, and which Buñuel's *Journal* hardly attempts.

It is possible, of course, to see the film as a masterpiece in a minor genre, simply as a collection of sharply incisive sketches illustrating the corruptions and perversions of the French bourgeoisie. On this level it certainly works beautifully. "La campagne, c'est toujours un peu triste," says Célestine almost as soon as she arrives at La Prieuré, and Roger Fellous' camera records a beautiful, mournful landscape of fields, parks and forests from which life seems to be alien, to have retreated into warmly foetid burrows like the gloomy Monteil mansion, stuffed to bursting point with objets d'art, and with a grand salon where visitors are obliged to take off their shoes in case they soil it. It is against this grey, joyless background that Buñuel unfolds his tableau of decadence and depravity, which is perfect of its kind: in a room where a massive bible stands open on a lectern and a Pre-Raphaelite angel simpers from a wall, old M. Rabour leafs through his album of Victorian girlie postcards; the frigid Madame Monteil interviews a fascinated curé about the theological implications of "certaines caresses," or concocts weird potions in the privacy of the bathroom which Célestine is forbidden to clean; and an elderly, virginal and tolerably hideous kitchen-maid weeps with tearful joy when coaxed into the steamy damp of her laundry by the furtively desperate M. Monteil. Buñuel, however, has tried to push a little further, not entirely successfully, through the character of Célestine herself.

* * *

Mirbeau's novel, written in 1900, is a first person narrative in which Célestine describes her life as a housemaid in the country home of a wealthy bourgeois couple, the Lanlares (in Buñuel, the Monteils); her flirtation with the crazy, flower-eating Captain next door; her affair with the coachman, Joseph, whom she knows to have raped and killed a little girl; her marriage to him and departure to open a café in Cherbourg after he has stolen the family silver. Round this central narrative is woven a fairly shapeless mass of incidents recollected by Célestine from her previous employments, notably her engagements by an old lady to keep her tubercular grandson happy (incorporated by Renoir), and by an elderly foot fetishist (incorporated by Buñuel). The purpose of both central narrative and surrounding incident is to show the depravity of "les maîtres", the abominable conditions of life below stairs, and the inevitable corruption of the servants by their masters. Célestine's unhypocritical, diamond-sharp eye does not exclude herself from the general condemnation. In one of the most striking chapters of the novel, she describes her first meeting with the prancing Captain next door, who demonstrates his taste for eating flowers, proudly explains that he will eat *anything*, then rushes her off to meet his beloved pet ferret, Kléber. Célestine, with deliberate malice ("Then a diabolical idea crossed my mind"), observes that of course he wouldn't eat Kléber. Confused by this unexpected challenge, the poor, unbalanced Captain immediately breaks the ferret's back and drifts away towards his kitchen. Significantly,

ABOVE: "THE DIARY" (PAULETTE GODDARD, FRANCIS LEDERER).
LEFT: "LE JOURNAL" (JEANNE MOREAU, GEORGES GERET).



"DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID": ALMIRA SESSIONS, PAULETTE GODDARD, IRENE RYAN.

Célestine has nothing to do with the killing of the Captain's squirrel in Renoir's version, while the episode does not figure at all in Buñuel's: for in both films Célestine is transformed from the dispassionate observer of Mirbeau's novel into a heroine.

With *The Diary of a Chambermaid*, this is not particularly surprising, not only because the film was made in Hollywood, or because Renoir's conception demanded a hero and heroine to unite the two worlds of masters and servants in revolution, but also because his characters are never conceived in acid. Mirbeau's Célestine must have been totally alien to Renoir. Though by no means unsympathetic—her clear-eyed honesty is a distinct saving grace—she has the kind of cruelty and strength of will which enables her to confront her opponents head on. For the most part, Renoir's characters act savagely only when driven to it, like Legrand in *La Chienne*, Lange in *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, Lantier in *La Bête Humaine*. Normally they tend to treat other people's lives and beliefs, however unjustifiable, with a kind of respect, preferring to slip away to their own world rather than have things out. Boudu (in *Boudu sauvé des eaux*) spits on M. Lestingois' floors, cleans his shoes on the bedclothes and sleeps with his wife, but dives quietly back into the river rather than have to tell his benefactor that he would prefer not to be the object of his well-meaning charity.

For Buñuel, the savage, uncompromising iconoclasm of *L'Âge d'or* still holds good, and his characters tend therefore to be much tougher (in both directions, good and bad), more certain that their path is the right one. The difficulty, as Buñuel is well aware, is to know which path leads where: and this is why so many Buñuel heroes, apparently on the right road, come a moral cropper (Father Lizardi in *La Mort en ce jardin*, Nazarin, Viridiana), or learn the hard way (Robinson Crusoe, Ramon Vasquez in *La Fièvre monte à El Pao*, Dr. Valerio in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*). Mirbeau's Célestine, in fact, is a complete Buñuel character, who could slip unaltered into any of his films, whether her role was to explode the preten-

sions of a Nazarin or a Viridiana, or whether she herself was to cut a path through her own frailties to true humanity like Crusoe or Dr. Valerio.

In the first half of the film, Buñuel's Célestine (Jeanne Moreau) is a more or less conventional soubrette-heroine, very similar in behaviour and reactions to Paulette Goddard in *Diary of a Chambermaid*: refusing to be overawed by Madame's fussy severity, mockingly parrying the amorous advances of Monsieur, boldly challenging Joseph's sullen authority, flirting gaily with the Captain, tenderly protecting the lonely little girl (the timid kitchen-maid in *Diary*), and in general reacting with vigorous honesty to the various turpitudes and injustices which she witnesses. By the halfway mark, however, the films (and the novel) begin to diverge. Renoir concentrates on the love affair between Célestine and Georges, the Lanlares' tubercular son, while Buñuel moves to Célestine's affair with Joseph. Secretly attracted by Joseph's brooding, animal power, she is further fascinated when she discovers that it is almost certainly he who has murdered the little girl. It is never made clear (and probably isn't to Célestine herself) how much her determined efforts to get to bed with Joseph owe to love, and how much to her belief that there he may be persuaded to reveal the truth about his guilt. At all events, as soon as she is certain Joseph is guilty, she manufactures evidence against him and secures his arrest. Whatever her earlier motives, in the brilliant sequence of Joseph's arrest Buñuel makes it quite clear that she does love him after a fashion. "We are alike, you and I," Joseph has surprised her by saying, "not to look at, of course, but deep down inside"; and as Joseph is led away by the gendarmes, Célestine meticulously arranges the glasses in the centre of the table with Joseph's exact gesture, then expressionlessly traces the word "Salaud!" with her thimble. The abuse is addressed to Joseph, but Buñuel leaves us in no doubt that Célestine is aware that it also refers to herself. She has done the world a service by ridding them of Joseph, but as with Viridiana, motives, acts and consequences are very different things.

This is a superb sequence—as fine as anything Buñuel has done—but the rupture in tone with what has gone before is excessive. It is as if the world of the first half of the film were being viewed objectively, and the second subjectively, without any adequate transition or character motivation. One sees what Buñuel is trying to do, of course. Mirbeau's Célestine does not betray Joseph, but marries him. She agrees to go to Cherbourg although she knows about the murder, and it is then that Joseph says, with complete truth, "We are alike, you and I." Buñuel places this remark earlier, when Célestine only suspects about the murder: in a sense he is trying to have his cake and eat it by making Célestine *unlike* Joseph in that she rejects his crime, but *becoming* like him when she commits a crime of her own by betraying him. There is no reason why this should not work, as *Nazarin* and *Viridiana* work, but here the two crimes seem unevenly balanced because Célestine has been presented earlier as a perfectly justified avenging angel.

Further, when Viridiana sits over the final game of cards, the rock-and-roll song blares out, and Jorge tells her "All cats are grey in the dark," one feels that her whole world has collapsed, that retribution is complete. With *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* one feels nothing of the sort. Buñuel cuts directly from the scene of Joseph's arrest to Célestine's wedding to the Captain. Obviously, by its placing in the film between Joseph's arrest and his acquittal (to go to Cherbourg to promote Fascist ideals), this marriage should carry forebodings of disaster. The Captain (played by Daniel Ivernel), however, comes over as a mainly likeable character. Presented with much less fantasy than by Renoir, shorn of his flower-eating, gay prancing, and the sudden maniac killing of his pet squirrel (which makes him a real homicidal threat in *Diary of a Chambermaid*), he seems a reasonable catch for Célestine: eccentric certainly, but otherwise an amiable, rather stolid country gentleman. Admittedly he is a liar, and has deceived

his previous housekeeper into thinking she will inherit his money. In the context of the corruptions and deceptions manifested by almost everybody else, however, the Captain seems comparatively harmless. And when we last see Célestine, comfortably breakfasting in bed with the Captain dancing attendance and a maid busy with the housework downstairs, one can't help feeling that even if she has sold out to "les maitres," she has done remarkably well for herself. All cats are Siamese in Célestine's dark.

* * *

Mirbeau, presenting the two worlds of rich and poor, masters and servants, through the dispassionate eyes of Célestine, observes with cynicism that they are in effect one world, united by sex and depravity. Buñuel, never a cynic, has done his best to change Célestine's role from a passive to an active one, and has left her broken-backed as a result. This problem never arises in *Diary of a Chambermaid*, where Renoir presents her unequivocally as a heroine: the two worlds are quite distinct (with M. Lanlaire a good master, and Joseph an evil servant), and it is the purity of her love for Georges Lanlaire which finally unites both masters and servants in revolution. Renoir's film has suffered a good deal of abuse in the past, being accused of phoniness, incompetence and worse. Although it has now been rehabilitated, and its extraordinary parallels noted with the acknowledged masterpiece *La Règle du Jeu*, an air of apologetic reservation still tends to creep in, so that it is usually pictured as an engaging fantasy, a *Règle du Jeu* in minor key. It would be more accurate, in fact, to describe it as a *Règle du Jeu* on a wider register. Everything is carried to greater extremes: on the one hand, the fantasy and artificial comedy, on the other, the paroxysmal cry of anger. Rather as Franju, in *Hôtel des Invalides*, used an *hommage* to militarism to present a violent attack on it, so Renoir presents a bitter call to revolution in the guise of a romantic charade. The extraordinary final sequence (which is not in Mirbeau's novel, nor in Renoir's script—it was improvised on the set), in which Joseph tries to cut his way with a whip through a Quatorze Juillet carnival and is lynched, while Georges frenetically distributes his family silver to the crowd, is probably one of the finest and most uncompromising in Renoir's whole work.

In itself, of course, an artificial charade, such as *Diary of a Chambermaid* would appear to be on the surface, could not carry this weight of meaning. But, as always with Renoir, it is the texture that counts; exactly as in *La Règle du Jeu*, he constantly undercuts the charade element by twisting his puppets to reveal flesh and blood. In particular, the film arouses one's sympathies with extreme care and cunning so that one feels not only for Georges and Célestine, or for M. Lanlaire, so downtrodden by his wife, or the Captain, so cruelly driven to kill the squirrel which is the only thing he really loves, but even for the eminently unpleasant Joseph. Renoir, even when he dislikes a character, as he obviously dislikes Joseph, can always understand him, and in two striking scenes he allows us to penetrate Joseph's sullenly hostile exterior. One is the visit to the Lanlaire cellars, when Joseph shows Célestine the family silver, hidden away like Aladdin's treasure in glittering, useless heaps, literally begging to be taken out and put into circulation; the other, the strangely touching moment when Joseph confides in Célestine his dream of retirement to the café in Cherbourg.

The corresponding scene in Buñuel's film goes for very little, not so much because his Joseph is more ruthless or evil (in fact, Renoir's Joseph is much more sinisterly terrifying), as because there is little nostalgia or desire in Buñuel for *le paradis perdu* of simple little sensuous pleasures like the springtime sun, the sweep of the countryside, or the return to a native village. At the end of *Boudu sauvé des eaux*, when Boudu falls out of the punt into the river, he forgets everything to wallow delightedly in the warm, gently flowing water; and it would probably never occur to Buñuel that one could



"THE DIARY": PAULETTE GODDARD, JUDITH ANDERSON, FRANCIS LEDERER, IRENE RYAN.

express a sense of complete liberty by that joyous 360 degree pan round the hill and riverbank as Boudu settles down to share his sandwich with a goat. *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz*, for instance, ends with Archibaldo, the homicidal maniac, curing himself by hurling the music box which is at the source of all his troubles into the river, and walking gaily away down a verdant, tree-lined path. But it is not Archibaldo's emergence into this world of fresh, unoppressive landscape so much as the grasshopper which he now refrains from killing which, for Buñuel, indicates his release. The same intellectual rather than sensuous method can be seen in *Nazarin*, where the priest's defeat is not indicated by the endless dusty road along which he wearily trudges, but by the pineapple which the old peasant woman humbly offers him. The most striking example of all, perhaps, comes in what might be called Buñuel's most Renoiresque film, *Robinson Crusoe*. Here, even though the story concerns a man coming to terms with himself and his environment through enforced solitude, Buñuel's vision is entirely interior and intellectual. In the beautiful scene when Crusoe runs wildly to the mountain top to shout the words of a psalm across the depths of the



"LE JOURNAL": JEANNE MOREAU AND GEORGES GERET.



AUTUMNAL LANDSCAPE IN "LE JOURNAL".

valley, all that he receives is emptiness—the hollow echo of his own voice and an intensified awareness of his barren isolation.

With Renoir, landscape invariably evokes a lyric response. Even in *La Bête Humaine*, when Lantier nearly strangles his cousin Flore in an epileptic fit, one remains keenly aware of the beauty of the grassy bank where only a moment before they had been quietly talking; in *The Southerner*, the opening tracking shots through the cotton fields convey at once the terrible, backbreaking drudge of the pickers, and the blinding beauty of the sea of cotton balls in the bright sun. Renoir's work is full of this regret that man is not more free to enjoy the beauty which offers itself so freely. And *Diary of a Chambermaid*, in spite of being exceptional among Renoir's films in that it was shot entirely in studio sets, has this same quality. In theory, the village sets are quaint France à la Hollywood; in practice, beautifully lit and photographed (art director, Lourié; camera, Lucien Andriot), they have an impressionistic enchantment, nowhere more evident than in the shimmering radiance of the scene in which Célestine, in white dress and parasol, trysts with Georges under the great oak in the middle of the village square. The scenes in the Lanlaire garden, too, have the same sunlit beauty, so that one feels real regret when the Captain slashes furiously at the flowers, or hurls stones through the neatly ranged rows of greenhouses (characteristically, Buñuel has the Captain hurling an unsavoury mixture of old boots, cans and garbage). For Renoir, the Lanlaire house and park, like their silver, is too precious to allow one selfish, tyrannical woman to keep to herself.

Visually, *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* is just as striking, if not more so, but Buñuel draws a totally different quality from his landscape. Here the overriding impression is not of spring, but of the encroaching gloom of autumn. "La campagne, c'est toujours un peu triste," Célestine observes bitterly, and outside a grey mist wavers uncertainly through the great vistas of silent trees, while inside, the rooms are lined with protective layers of tables, chairs, lamps, books, statues, plants and ornaments of every description, all huddled close together. Everything offers an intangible threat of hostility: as we watch Célestine arrive at La Prieuré, a hand stealthily draws aside the foliage which partly screens her from view, and proves to belong to the harmless M. Rabour, out for a stroll in his park; a butterfly settling lazily on a flower in the apparently empty garden is suddenly blown to bits; the little girl, Claire, lies dead in a sunlit patch of forest beside the bush of ripe wild berries which she has been picking. Even the loveliest single composition in the film, a tranquil long shot of Joseph quietly raking a bonfire while the smoke drifts across the front of the house, takes on a savage disquiet by being

placed immediately after the rape scene. For Buñuel, in fact, landscape is a chameleon, indistinguishable from its inhabitants. And if the corrupt society of La Prieuré were swept away, the place would be reborn: *autres mœurs, autres pays*.

* * *

Having said this, where next? Originally, this article started out from an idea that here was a unique opportunity to draw a direct comparison between the work of two great directors. As it progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the task was only feasible up to a point. How can one make any valid comparison that neatly sums up two films which, despite their common origin, are so different from each other, and in any case operate on entirely different levels? For me, *Diary of a Chambermaid* is a complete success, *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* isn't; and yet, what does that mean? Not necessarily that Renoir's film is greater than Buñuel's, certainly not that Buñuel's is any less remarkable, but simply that in a Renoir context his film works, while in a Buñuel context *Le Journal* doesn't.

Here, perhaps, one is at the crux of the problem. It is impossible to dissociate either film from one's knowledge of the director's other work: they come to us as part of a private world, ringed by an aura of hints, cross-references, even aspirations which may not be apparent from the films themselves. One's feelings about *Diary of a Chambermaid* must be coloured by recollections of *La Règle du Jeu* and the echoes between the two films which illuminate Renoir's conscious attempt to transpose his theme on a wider register (or, as Bazin put it, much more neatly, to compose a variation on his "drame gai" as a "tragédie burlesque"). Considered in isolation, it might be perfectly possible to find *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* not only a brilliant realisation of Mirbeau's novel, but a completely successful film. But *Viridiana* remains in the background as a reminder that, through the character of Célestine, Buñuel is reaching beyond Mirbeau, and that his conception does not, finally, come off.

There are, though, tangents which one can seize fleetingly, such as the fact that in adapting a minor, often rather unpleasant novel, Renoir and Buñuel have made major films which so transform the original material that neither emerges as unpleasant. The indiscriminating mass of incident in the novel, which often reads like an anthology of Sunday newspaper revelations, is shaped by both directors through their vision of what the world might be into sharp attack on the inhibitions and deprivations forced on humanity by a corrupt, meaningless social structure. Again, the novel has a strong streak of repellent cruelty (notably Mirbeau's gloating description of Célestine's despairing attempt to die with Georges by mingling her kisses with the blood he coughs up), which is harnessed by Renoir and Buñuel into a strong undercurrent of violence.

Curiously, therefore, *Diary of a Chambermaid* becomes one of the normally gentle Renoir's most violent films (the brutal fight in the greenhouse; the killing of the squirrel; the episode of the goose; Joseph's whip; the murder of the Captain; the lynching); while the normally savage Buñuel scales down to meet Renoir in reticence. There is very little that shocks as the slashed eye in *Chien Andalou*, say, or much of *Los Olvidados* shocks. Instead, the sequence of Claire's murder is skirted in shots of a wild boar and a rabbit, the sound of beating wings, of a train rushing past, of a whistle screaming, to the almost elegiac tenderness of the shot of Claire lying half-hidden behind a bush while two snails crawl gently across her leg; the discovery of the old foot fetishist, in an exquisite arabesque of the camera down from the bed canopy, backed by a graceful earlier quotation of the music box from *Archibaldo de la Cruz*, lifts to a hint that he has at last found peace.

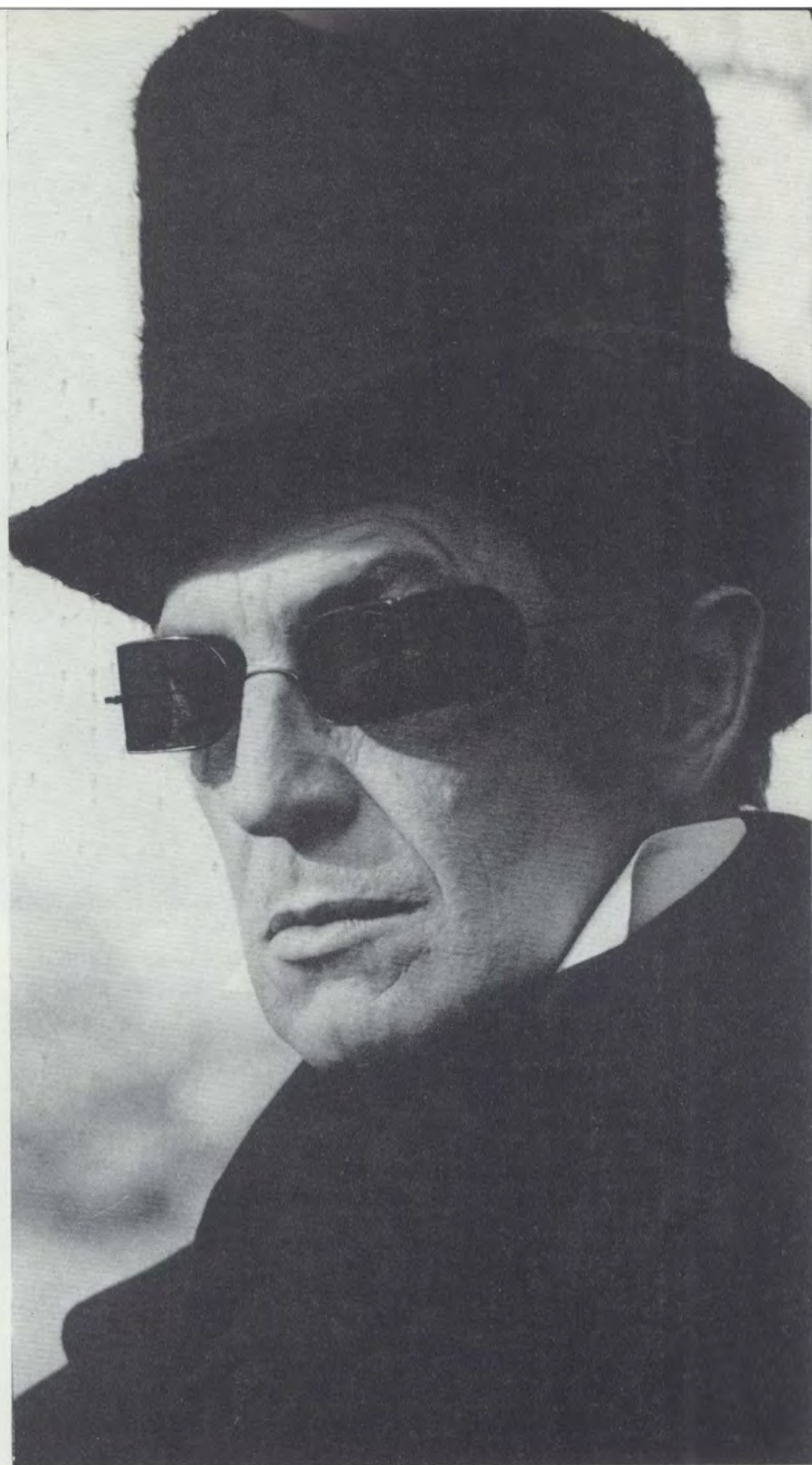
And there the tangent divides again. For Renoir, with his optimistic faith in man, the revolution can come now; for Buñuel, with his pessimistic faith (his bitter realism, if you like), it only must.

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN OF Roger Corman, "the Orson Welles of Z pictures," over the past two years. Too much, perhaps, in so far as his phenomenal output has been stressed at the expense of the actual films. And not just his output but his youth (he is 38), his overt commercialism, his lurid titles (e.g. *Teenage Caveman*, *Attack of the Crab Monsters*, *Viking Women and the Sea Serpent*) and his apparent readiness to shoot the odd feature in two days and a night. The risks of such a career, and of the publicity it has recently received, are obvious. The films are rarely press-shown (two out of about 42, at any rate in this country), so that a cult has tended to precede wide critical awareness and before you can say Cottafavi the familiar defensive attitudes have started to work their way into print—attitudes reminiscent of Mrs. Flint's baleful line to poor Aunt Sylvia in *This Happy Breed*: "So that's the new hat we've heard such a lot about."

All this is rather a pity. For one thing I don't see how Corman's refreshing lack of pretension can usefully support a cult. Output in itself signifies little. One has only to recall that John Ford made some 48 films before achieving a big success with *The Iron Horse*. Doubtless it was necessity, as much as the enjoyment of churning out 2-reel Westerns with a trusted team, that kept Ford hard at it in the early Twenties and Corman in the late Fifties. It may well be that some of Ford's earliest work was as crude and shoddy as Corman's. But Ford had a market for his Westerns, as Corman did for his honestly unserious teenage quickies. Both directors managed to impose on that market a standard of growing liveliness and craftsmanship, to experiment at a stage when stagnation might so easily have set in. Both directors managed to survive, live within and renovate the tradition of mass-production at a time when blockbusters were regarded as the only respectable panacea for an ailing cinema.

Therefore I see nothing very remarkable about Corman—not when you consider him in a perspective that embraces Ford, Ince, Tod Browning, Hathaway, prolific and fully apprenticed directors with a knack for particular material which they either extended or (*vide* Browning's *Freaks*) transcended. With *The Stranger* and *The Masque of the Red Death* Corman has begun to do both. Almost alone among his American-International contemporaries he has stuck to the cinema where others, notably Bernard L. Kowalski, have been sucked into television. And he has skirted the dangers both of repetition (*The Raven* and *The Terror* had started to betray the thinness and formulary nature of his Gothic send-ups) and of the open appeal of the horror film to the audience's grosser instincts. Browning, we know, did less than justice to Bram Stoker because he couldn't resist an easy laugh. Moreover the supporting actors in *Dracula* were often no better than Corman's; *Dracula's* script meandered just as badly as those of the two Corman-Karloff films. As for Corman's *The Man with the X-Ray Eyes* (1963), it has its adherents but seems to me untypical in that it falls into all the traps I've mentioned. Surely this is trash, and degrading trash at that: inert because the story is stodgily acted, predictable and spuriously allegorical in outcome ("If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out," what else?) and hardly even attempts to deal with the awkward narrative difficulties raised by saddling Ray Milland with X-Ray visions. The "humour"—Milland finds he can see girls naked—defeats itself the moment one asks why he (or the camera) can perceive their flesh yet neither their clothes nor their skeletons. (He is, after all, able to diagnose obscure ailments just by looking at a patient.) Perhaps trash is too

VINCENT PRICE IN ROGER CORMAN'S LATEST ADAPTATION FROM POE: "THE TOMB OF LIGEIA".



Z FILMS

Peter John
Dyer





"THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH": JANE ASHER AND VINCENT PRICE.

harsh a word and I'm being unduly subjective about a theme I found depressing. The fact remains that the film has all the symptoms of the mechanical potboiler.

* * *

The Masque of the Red Death, Corman's first British film, shared a double bill with *X-Ray Eyes* and conclusively silenced any doubts about Corman being little more than a clever and opportunistic craftsman. Another Poe adaptation, it continues to flout Poe's spirit but this time puts back something powerful, basically serious and almost visionary in its own right. The shafts of irreverent humour remain, but on this occasion they spring from the satanism of Vincent Price's uncommonly forceful Prince Prospero. Once described as a "sissified Bela Lugosi", Price here presents evil intellectually, the relish tempered with cool disquisitions upon the nature of fear, the domination over others effortless and indisputable, the moments of frenzy stylised and arresting. Indeed it is Price alone who makes the weakest scene, the Masque itself, work. As the Red Death stalks through the crowded ballroom, condemning the guests to nothing more alarming than a spraygun of letterbox paint, one is held by the sight of Price in his sheikish fancy dress, pursuing and then fleeing the intruder. While the revellers contort themselves in balletic poses, Price relies upon hieratic gestures, arms cumbrously upraised and features pained.

Apart from the actual Masque, there is very little sign of Corman's old penchant for gaudy, filtered colour effects and unsubtle trickwork. In fact the film is strikingly handsome, with vast, impressive sets, fluid camerawork and majestically tasteful colour. Moreover none of this is the work of Corman's usual collaborators, but of British technicians (notably the photographer Nicolas Roeg) who have succeeded in making a refreshingly un-British (or at any rate non-Hammer) British horror movie, with shock cuts that really shock and a leisurely-paced air of genuine contemplation.

Corman's debts are those of the enthusiastic cinephile. That's to say the piece is emblazoned with grateful bows to other films and directors: to *The Seventh Seal* for the configuration of Death and the poetic last scene—the gathering of the plague-bringers and the listing of the survivors; to

Basil Rathbone's inhumanly reckless coach-driving (*A Tale of Two Cities*) for the first sight of Price in his carriage ("Burn the village to the ground"); to Bergman again and Buñuel for the scenes of humiliation and destruction—the grovelling guests displaying their various animal natures, the revenge of the dwarf upon Patrick Magee's aristocrat, disguised as an ape and then hoisted in flames upon a candelabra. These references to other films nowhere detract from Corman's own achievement. They are fully assimilated into a personal concept that is at once brutish and unsensational, evil-clouded yet illuminated with tenderness (the two dwarfs, the village child, Prospero's unwilling, puzzled respect for his young prisoner, Francesca), sophisticated yet simple as a legend.

The performances are on a higher level than in Corman's previous films. Skip Martin's gilded, whip-cracking dwarf, Patrick Magee's sly ape-aristocrat, John Westbrook's sonorous and faceless Red Death, are all excellent. A much-improved Hazel Court tackles the tricky business of marrying the Devil and being clawed to death by a falcon with aplomb. And if Jane Asher is a bit squeaky as innocent Francesca, she's still an improvement on some of Corman's Hollywood juveniles.

Revealingly, Corman can make little of Francesca's piety. Prospero has all the fun, celebrating a censor-slashed Black Mass in a coffin, unmasking Death only to find it wears his own face. Evil has rarely been so generously or intelligently expatiated, in a script that assumes (like Peter Brook) that we know who the Lord of the Flies is. Corman still can't resist the quirky anti-climax: Francesca's panic-stricken flight through a series of chambers, each beautifully designed in a different colour motif with its own awesome story to tell, is followed by Prospero's polite comment the next morning that she looks pale and presumably hasn't slept very well. This is more in line with the earlier, self-parodying scripts ("See to the crypt, please, James") by Richard Matheson. Otherwise the predominantly serious tone is more characteristic of Charles Beaumont, co-writer with R. Wright Campbell and sole author of *The Stranger* (1961), based by Beaumont on his novel *The Intruder*.

I caught up with *The Stranger* recently, and was interested to find the same preoccupation with Evil as an unexplained,

almost metaphysical force. But because the themes, racial integration and mob violence, are topical and rooted in social reality, an unresolved yet intriguing dualism springs up between familiar liberal gestures—rather wanly personified by the crusading newspaper editor—and the catalytic presence of the charming, good-looking intruder with a lust for power, Adam Cramer. The result, if ultimately doomed, gains a real freshness from William Shatner's playing as Cramer, a virtually unmotivated bigot whose casual gallantry and smooth way with landladies and wealthy, overfed bigwigs carries a charge of demonianism.

The film was shot on location in Charleston, Missouri, in three weeks and amounted to a confidence trick played on Southerners who themselves took part as extras. Eventually Corman had to resort to police protection and employed bodyguards from a university football team. Much of the resultant tension and urgency is communicated in the film, which also frequently crystallises the life of the Charleston community in telling, Ford-like episodes: the gossiping of old ladies in a faded hotel; the languid, menacing stares of street corner louts; the march of Negro students to school. But despite some edged performances, especially Robert Emhardt as Cramer's gross fair-weather ally, playing cat-and-mouse with the Negro boy tied to a playground swing, the film staggers under too much mechanically-plotted melodrama, starting with the seduction of a salesman's wife, and ending with the salesman's revenge upon the unmasked, cowering Cramer. In themselves, the rape frame-up, the almost fatal beating of the newspaperman, and Cramer's compulsion to overreach himself, are only too likely. It is their convenient accumulation which fails to convince, as does Cramer's final come-uppance. Surely an evil force like that never gives ground, merely grins, then cuts and runs for it. Also I'm dubious about mobs shuffling away under the weight of their own shame: sadists balked of their prey at the moment of consummation don't listen to reason or proofs of innocence, they generally scream louder than ever for the *coup de grâce*.

* * *

In spite of their shortcomings, these two films suggest that Corman is the most promising of the Z film-makers at work today. He seems quite philosophic about the lack of wide-scale distribution for *The Stranger*; and I suppose one can be philosophic in turn about the lack of press coverage for *Masque*. (Le Amiche, Rossi's *Smog*, Astruc's *La Proie pour l'Ombre*, are just a random selection of undeniably distinguished films never press shown, which is unfortunately only too often a euphemism for "films the critics haven't bothered to see for themselves"). More curious, perhaps, is the lack of enthusiasm for *Masque* shown by critics who have seen it. Indeed their disappointment is so hard to define, to pin down, that one suspects one may be up against a veiled inverted snobbery. "He does such marvellous spoofs, what does he want to go and turn serious for?"

A good friend who reviews in the Trade papers felt much the same way about de Broca's gleamingly picaresque *Cartouche* ("It's really funny in the middle, but then they go and let Cardinale die!"), and Curtis Bernhardt's version of the Damon and Pythias story *Il Tiranno di Siracusa*, a sandal-and-saddle spectacle (i.e. "made for morons") which consequently had no business imposing quality (i.e. relatively straight and sober dialogue by Bridget Boland and superb autumnal photography by Aldo Tonti) on a product which in any case "didn't even have Steve Reeves' name to sell it."

It is easier to analyse the patronising attitude of most critics to Z films (which embrace whole cycles by Cottafavi, Riccardo Freda, Mario Bava, Sergio Corbucci and others) than it is to explain their fascination for addicts. Such films were always patronised, possibly because horror has long been

regarded as somehow retrogressive and vaguely, nastily sexual—a symptom of infantilism, or of the hankering after Arabian/Inquisition/Bare Mountain nights/delights. Nor does it help much to be a "name": over thirty years ago Dreyer was trounced by Paul Rotha for making the "meretriciously photographed" *Vampyr*, and the cachet of an H. G. Wells novel didn't save *The Island of Dr. Moreau* from being banned. Over the years a vicious circle has grown up, with critics lambasting anything from *Zéro de Conduite* (the greatest Z film ever) to *Psycho* which an incautious distributor thrusts upon them, the Trade itself learning to withhold such products (unless made by Hitchcock) from critics, and critics in turn falling acquiescently into the pattern by assuring themselves they can give that Corman or Irvin Kershner or dubbed Riccardo Freda thing at the Rialto a safe miss.

It is not worth labouring the point. Like Old Time Music Hall or bullfights or marijuana or leather trousers, Z films appeal only to addicts on the one hand, and the casual, unselective buyer on the other. Any cause of regret one may have lies elsewhere. Firstly, regret that although Fantasy, which includes Horror and Science Fiction, has always tended to fall into the Z film category, its terms of reference can sometimes be disconcertingly wide. Thus a charming and picturesque piece of Fordiana, Don Siegel's *Hound Dog Man*, went unnoticed a few years ago much, I would have thought, to everyone's (and the critics') loss. It starred Fabian, the pop-singer, and one almost wonders whether his name in conjunction with the title struck the Trade as being too reminiscent of the then current symbiosis between Horror and rock'n'roll.

One's second regret is that when somebody like Corman really launches out, whether with another Poe story like *Masque of the Red Death* or a first artistic fling like *The Stranger*, so few people take serious notice; either because perversely they prefer the draughty-castle Corman they've grown accustomed to, or because—ambitious or not—they don't like that kind of movie anyway. As it happens Corman is well enough established to go on opening doors and wedging his foot inside. But what of an unestablished British director like John Krish, whose first feature, a highwrought and imaginative SF-fantasy starring John Neville and called *Unearthly Stranger*, came and went last year without a word of critical acknowledgment? It seems particularly senseless, at a time when our few known youngish directors are labouring to produce whopping prestige productions of uncertain artistic merit, that our training grounds for less pretentious (and more truly cinematic?) talents should be empty of spectators. At least one assumes the Press stands to be empty. Otherwise it's not like them to be so strictly unvocals.

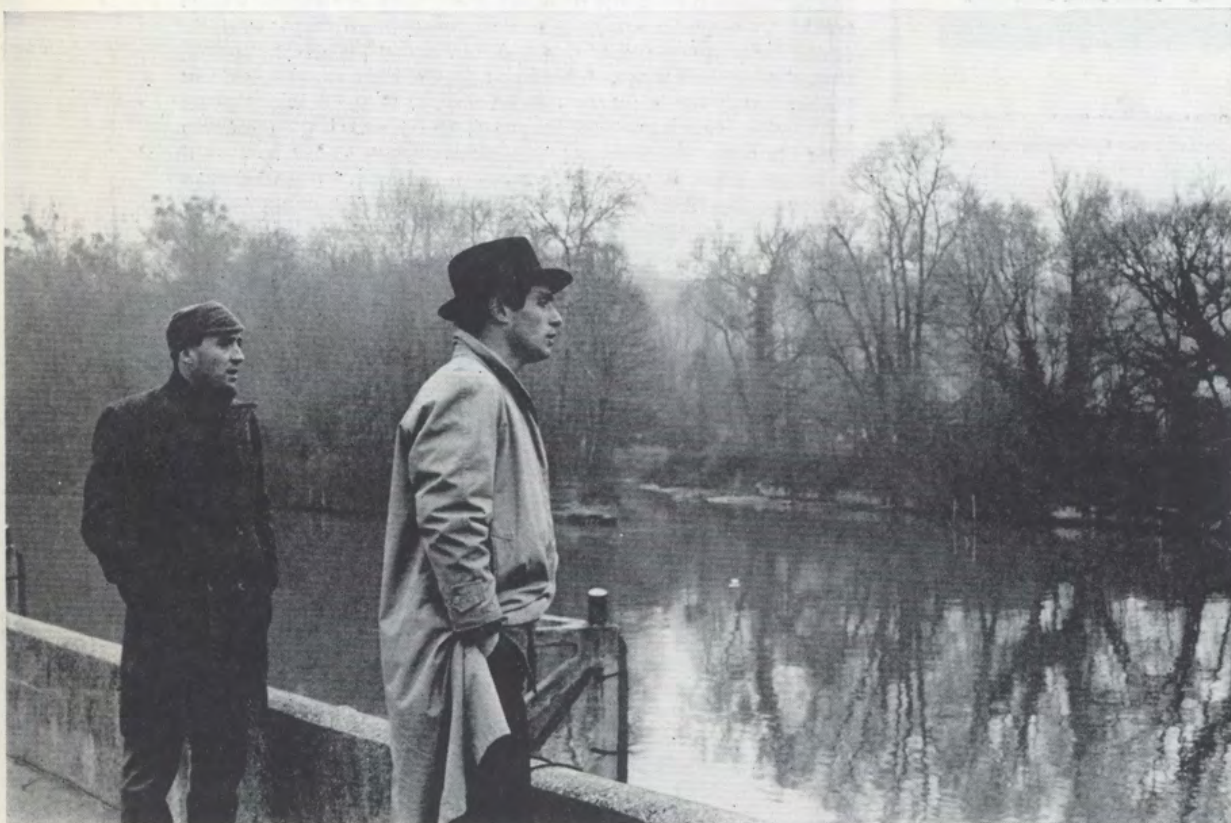


ROBERT FLEMYNG AND BARBARA STEELE IN
"L'ORRIBILE SEGRETO DEL DOTTOR HICHOCK",
DIRECTOR RICCARDO FREDA (ALIAS: ROBERT HAMPTON).

BANDE A PART



" 'What do filmgoers want?' Griffith asked. 'A girl and a gun.' It's to meet their wishes that I have made, and Columbia will distribute, 'Bande à Part,' a sure-fire story which will sell a lot of tickets." So Godard promoted his film in a trade paper advertisement at Cannes. Anna Karina is the girl, Claude Brasseur has the gun, and Sami Frey—well, he stands between. The camera is Coutard's; the story, a "Serie B" novel, "Fool's Gold"; the settings, the grey suburbs of Paris. Gala will distribute in Britain.



BANDE A PART



FESTIVALS

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berlin



"SHE AND HE": SACHIKO HIDARI.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO when films like *La Notte* and *Une Femme est une Femme* were winning prizes in Berlin, the Berlin Festival seemed well on the way to perhaps supplanting Cannes or Venice. In the last year or two, however, it seemed to be going down the drain. Evidently realising what was happening, the Festival authorities made a big effort this year to restore Berlin to true Class A status.

The first thing they did was to copy (very sensibly) the Cannes idea of a "Critics' Week", i.e. to show eight or nine films selected by German film critics rather than by the Festival administration. And in spite of a bit of trouble when the critics tried—and failed—to show a couple of Iron Curtain films, it was a huge success. When the Venice Festival announced (incredibly) that it had turned down Godard's *Bande à Part*, it became the high spot of the Berlin Critics' show.

Bande à Part (*The Outsiders*) has been described as a return to the world of *Breathless*. This is partly true, but whereas

in *Breathless* the gangster and the American girl were literally outsiders, the one an outlaw, the other a foreigner, Odile (Anna Karina), Franz (Sami Frey) and Arthur (Claude Brasseur) are outsiders in a more profound sense. Most of the film takes place outside Paris, in the *banlieue*. Banlieue, of course, means suburbs, but not what we in England generally think of as suburbs. Not Harrow or Kingston; rather somewhere like Wandsworth or Wormwood Scrubs. The *banlieue* is not only the setting of the film; it is in many ways a metaphor of its subject.

However square it may sound, we really have to face up to the fact that Godard is a moralist. Many people refused to believe that there was a moral to *Vivre sa Vie* largely, I believe, because they couldn't reconcile Godard's modern approach to what they felt to be the irredeemably un-hip idea that the wages of sin is death. All Godard's characters are dogged by what they call *la poisse*—bad luck—but what has often been called original sin. Michel Poiccard, the little soldier, Nana B., the *carabiniers*, all come to sticky ends. They are people whose world is always threatening to collapse around them; and the comic twist at the end of *Bande à Part* doesn't really invalidate this. Arthur and Franz have lived on the edge of criminal life without ever having gone all the way. It is a chance meeting with Odile at an incredible language school which pushes them over the edge. She lives in a suburban villa with her aunt and a lodger who has stashed away a fortune in undeclared revenue; the three kid themselves that robbing a tax evader isn't really against the law, and slowly the wheels begin to turn, and then to grind.

Stylistically, *Bande à Part* is more like Godard's earlier films than, say, *Le Mépris*. It's the old hop, skip and jump-cut throughout the film, but this time we feel from the very start that the jump will lead straight to disaster. The photography is even greyer than that of *Vivre sa Vie*, and Godard and Coutard have succeeded in the apparently impossible task of filming the *banlieue* in all its essential hideousness and yet at the same time transforming it into something of dreamlike, if doom-laden, beauty.

* * *

Although its photography and framing are in the great Japanese tradition, the techniques of Susumi Hani's *She and He* are very new wave-ish: a jumpy camera, highly elliptical scenario, and a nervous style of editing. If one goes on to point out that the film's theme can be described as Antonioniesque, *She and He* may sound like an extremely derivative work. And yet it is not: Hani's style is personal, and although Antonioni might not have rejected the subject matter, it is in no way a copy of the master.

A young couple live on the outskirts of Tokyo in a modern block of flats. She is a Manchurian refugee and an orphan, he a Japanese man-in-the-grey-flannel-suit, but nice. Next to their building lies a wasteland of wooden shacks. When a fire destroys these ramshackle huts, the wife becomes aware for the first time of the existence of this other world—a world to which she, in her sleek middle-class comfort, had scarcely given a thought. Gradually she becomes more and more involved in the squatters' lives, to the growing annoyance of her husband. "What are these people to you?" he Cain-like asks. She is forced to admit that she doesn't know, but at least she is trying to find out. Eventually the wasteland is completely razed to make room for one of those putting ranges which seem to have become the status symbol of modern Japan. The blind man, the rag-man and the others disappear; the dog is beaten to death; but it is too late now. Inside the concrete walls of their labour-saving flat, she awakens in the middle of the night; her eyes wide, she stares panic-stricken into space.

Like Antonioni's films, *She and He* depends very much on the leading actress to bear the weight of it. Hani's wife, Sachiko Hidari, is up to the responsibility. Sensitive, beautiful and radiant, she carries the film over its occasional patches of

flabby construction. Like Monica Vitti, she isn't basically a moper, so one is all the more convinced by her realisation of the contradiction and the essentially tragic nature of life. The husband is played by Eiji Okada (of *Hiroshima mon Amour*) and he proves the perfect foil: basically a good guy, all he wants is a normal life, to work his eight hours and to come home to a quiet evening with his wife. No complications. With this film, Hani has more than fulfilled the promise of his earlier *Bad Boys*. Of the younger generation of Japanese directors, he seems most likely to achieve stature.

* * *

Satyajit Ray's *Mahanagar* (*The Great City*) is resolutely classical in style. Completely indifferent to fashion, Ray goes his own road. Even the single use of a zoom-lens shot comes as a shock, so simple and traditional is the film's technique. And yet it is very different from Ray's earlier films. *Mahanagar* is resolutely de-lyricised. No beautiful landscape shots, it all takes place in the Calcutta of the 1960s. In fact, it approaches absolute realism.

Its theme is the conflict between the old and the new and how it affects a young couple. But this time there is little nostalgia for the old. Understanding, yes: take the first day the young wife goes off to work. The grandparents, considering it the ultimate disgrace, are inconsolable. The husband, whose idea it was in the first place, is torn with doubts. To be sure, they need the money—his job in the bank doesn't pay enough to make ends meet—but he is nearly overcome with his own audacity at finding such a contemporary solution. As for the wife, she is just plain scared. Like Chekhov, Ray makes you smile at their exaggerated fears, yet sympathise with their distress. In much the same way Arati, the working wife, is slightly scandalised by her Anglo-Indian colleague, the somehow appropriately named Edith Simmons. And yet her admiration for her independence eventually leads her to accept Edith's new ideas. Slightly bolshy, very much the liberated young lady, Edith finally persuades Arati to wear dark glasses (seemingly the badge of modernity in India) and lipstick ("You put it on your forehead, silly; why not put it on your lips?"). But then again, funny as she is, Ray also reveals in Edith the tragic position of today's Anglo-Indian. Neither one thing nor the other, she occupies a perilously marginal position in society, and by the end of the film she suffers the consequences.

But much of *Mahanagar* is just plain funny. Arati's door-to-door visits selling her knitting-machines yield some delightful encounters with a retired English colonel, a well-to-do Bengal lady, and a surprised but resourceful bachelor. Some of the best scenes are set in the ladies' washroom. When he worked in an advertising agency in the Forties, Ray says he learnt that that was where all the great moments of office comedy and drama took place; and as the ladies' was separated from the gents' by only a ¾-wall, he used to spend hours listening to the girls. This is where Arati runs to examine the contents of her first pay packet. Madhabi Mukherjee is perhaps the best of Ray's actresses, and her face on opening the envelope manages to convey her delight at the money and what it will buy for her family; her fear that she has somehow offended against the natural order of things by taking a job; a flash of feminine cupidity; and finally a secret smile of satisfaction at the thought that, after all, she has earned it—all by herself.

RICHARD ROUD

karlovy vary

THERE WAS SOMETHING SYMBOLIC about Karlovy Vary this year: this pretty little spa town with its reminders of nineteenth century splendours (with one hotel named the Moskva and another the Richmond) was the setting for a meeting between East and West which extended far beyond the physical presence of so many different nationalities. As

far as films are concerned, the Iron Curtain no longer exists. The films of all nations are beginning to look alike; the new grammar of the cinema as expounded by the French and Italians has become the international language; and Communist film-makers now seemingly feel themselves old-fashioned if their work fails to reflect some Western stylistic influence, whatever its context. So we saw a basically simple Cuban revolutionary story tricked out with all manner of sophisticated Resnais-style time ellipses; a Polish post-war thriller which copied its structure from *High Noon*; a Czech Western, *Lemonade Joe*; and a Czech musical (*The Hop Pickers*) in which the influences included Donen, Minnelli and the Beatles.

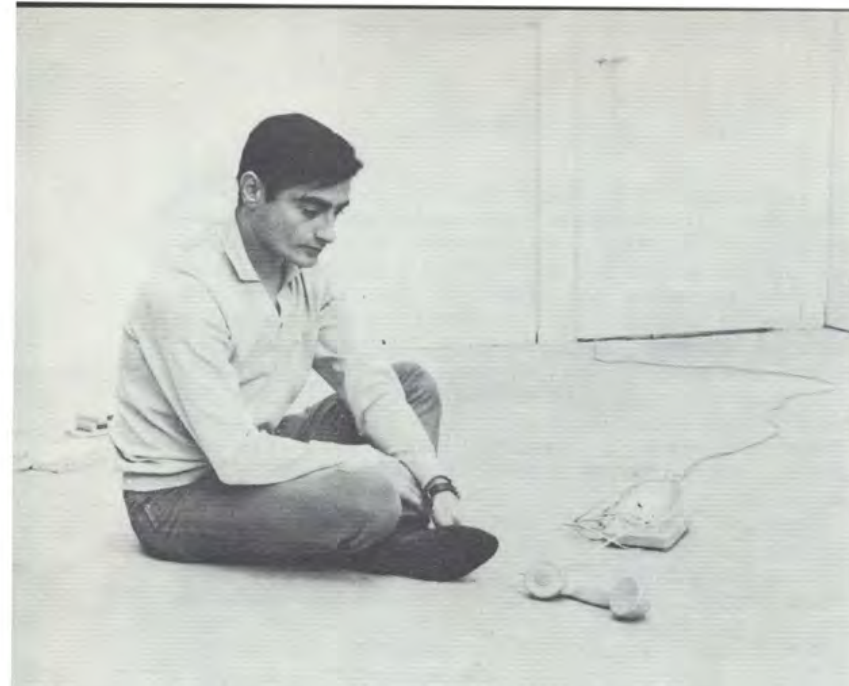
Certain things, however, have not changed. Out of all this cosmopolitanism came a real old-fashioned monstrosity: a 3½-hour Russian war film called *The Living and the Dead*, whose strong anti-Stalinist gestures were weighted down by precisely that heavy, faceless style of direction which Stalin himself favoured. The Soviet cinema was saved by the presence of Kozintsev, who showed his *Hamlet*, talked excitedly about his last London visit, and eagerly sought the views of every foreign visitor in sight.

More personalities: America continued its peaceful co-existence policy by sending another generally affable delegation, including a bronzed Henry Fonda (who clearly enjoyed recognising himself in "Lemonade Joe"), Francis Lederer, a returned native with a nice line in homely Czech speech-making, and Elia Kazan, who dropped in for *America, America* and pursued his own policy of making friends and influencing people by observing that East Europeans were really much like other people and (jokingly?) that the left-wing Press were surprisingly well-dressed.

Self-criticism was the thing this year. Several otherwise unremarkable Eastern entries made their own little anti-conformist protest (usually about the treatment of the individual by an unfeeling bureaucracy); and it was a lucky coincidence that the second American entry should have been *The Best Man*, with its outspoken clash between liberal and extreme right-wing electioneering policies—it was shown during the week of Senator Goldwater's nomination. This fact was clearly in everybody's mind at the crowded American press conference, and led to some fairly guarded questions to Fonda and Cliff Robertson about their attitudes towards their

"LEMONADE JOE".





CHARLES DENNER IN "LA VIE A L'ENVERS".

parts in the film. Robertson's sudden interjection of "I don't like Goldwater either" got a big hand and cleared the air considerably, after which we were soon into questions about Fonda's favourite parts. I thought he was a bit apologetic about his Westerns (he mentioned titles but never Ford's name); and then we had the inevitable enquiry about the kind of social films now being made in America. The Karlovy Vary audience still tends to feel that bad social realism is better than no realism at all. At other conferences, someone was quite likely to complain that a festival entry was "merely entertainment" and thus ineligible for such an event.

All these attitudes came to the fore in speeches at the Open Forum, a general debate taking place over three or four mornings which is now a regular feature at Karlovy Vary and Moscow. This year, we were faced with three highly articulate factions: the exponents of traditional, no-nonsense socialist realism (led by the Russian delegation and joined by individual Indians, Bulgarians, etc.); a strong anti-conformist group including several young Czech and Hungarian directors; and a miscellaneous "way-out" group including the young P. Adams Sitney, who brought examples of the New American Cinema to a puzzled audience and caused some ideological shudders with statements like "What happens if you think that Ezra Pound is the greatest modern poet and then discover that he was a fascist?"

The festival showing of the uncut version of Bergman's *The Silence* produced some unexpected light relief at these discussions. (Incidentally, the film itself became the equivalent of 8½ in Moscow last year, with a wildly excitable mob trying to push through one small door into the cinema.) Ignoring the film's more scabrous passages, certain delegates became passionately eloquent on the question of Bergman's decision to show Gunnel Lindblom's breast, a sight which grossly offended Mr. Kumar, an Indian journalist. These and other pleas for more censorship provoked an eager defence of artistic freedom from speakers of all political colours, including Harry Schein from the Swedish Film Institute, who revealed in passing that the offending breast belonged, in fact, to a stand-in. The entire debate inevitably had no real outcome. Towards the end, as both sides (roughly designated as conformist and anti-conformist) were seeking some kind of victory, a few petty jealousies between the East European states became evident, and no one managed any clear assessment of the few new talents thrown up by the festival. In fact, most delegates seemed loathe to discuss what individual talent really meant. Everybody agreed, however, that the cinema was a pretty influential and dangerous medium—a fact neatly summed up by Mr. Abbas, the Indian director, who recalled the old Indian government office which bore the slogan "Explosives, Narcotics, Cinema and Theatre".

I have left the new films and directors until the end because they need to be discussed in the light of the controversies which are spotlighted at Karlovy Vary. One film emerged from the Hungarian entries as something fresh, alive and creative: *The Current* by István Gaal. A group of adolescent boys and girls gather for a day out on the beach. Everything is gay and easy until they discover that one of the boys is missing. A prolonged search ensues until finally they realise he has been drowned. Gradually, their feelings towards each other are changed by the event—it is the end of summer and of youth. The presence of Antonioni is felt not only in the story-line; some of the groupings and visual ideas are very sophisticated and over-chic (recalling Klee), but only occasionally do they overload the film. The first half-hour on the beach has a marvellous feeling for light and air and water; thereafter, the characterisation becomes a little thin, but Gaal effectively brings all the strands together at the end. Altogether, a very promising first film.

This film apart, the festival undoubtedly belonged to the young Czechs. I first got a whiff of this new atmosphere in a youth restaurant in Prague where long Ginsberg poems were being recited to a rapt audience. A similar air of fairly desperate protest is now visible in the Czech cinema and was demonstrated at Cannes with *Joseph Kilian*. Now, in *The Accused* (winner of the Karlovy Vary Grand Prix), a trial drama which rips open areas of corruption in all layers of society, and *Diamonds of the Night*, a nightmarish study of two escapees from a concentration camp, we saw the continuation of what must be a particularly liberal policy on the part of the State-owned film company. Another frankly experimental Slovak film, *Each Day of Every Week*, could have been made by any French or American avant-garde group; it was equally pretentious but had a little more passion in its freezing anti-Bomb imagery.

To be honest, I must confess that I didn't care very much for the way any of these Czech films were made (excepting *Kilian*). Too often the methods seemed calculated and shop-worn, with a chronic addiction to the zoom lens, atonal scores and angle-conscious camerawork. Aside from its explosive content, *The Accused* is very boring to look at because it tries to achieve a simple shooting style à la *Twelve Angry Men*, but this kind of simplicity has evaded the two directors, Kadar and Klos. I don't want to suggest that all the new Czech films are bleak and depressing—there is a good deal of wit and fantasy in *The Hop Pickers* as well as some sharp knocks at hide-bound theories on youth and love. What these directors seem to need now is the experience to formulate what is, in essence, a workable narrative style without all those pseudo-elegant touches of *recherche* "art" and decoration.

It was a pity that Buñuel's *Diary of a Chambermaid* was relatively overlooked at the festival; it may not be Buñuel's greatest work but it was probably the best film shown. Discussion of form and content is meaningless, for here they are inextricably fused. The narrative is the film; Buñuel simply tells the story clearly and economically and yet the personal overtones emerge as unmistakably as ever. If only the Jury had taken a chance and given Buñuel some sort of symbolic prize as the best "young" director.

JOHN GILLET

venice

LONG FACES PROWLLED EVERYWHERE on the Lido during the first days of the Festival this year. The usually serene Venetian sky clouded over, a chill wind began to blow, and the films looked grey enough to match. A disease of flabby sensibility (symptoms: souls, and messages of peace and goodwill) hung heavily over entries like *Les Amitiés Particulières*, Delannoy's coy study of love between schoolboys, and Valo Radev's *The Peach Thief*, a Bulgarian romance set in a World War I prison camp. One might perhaps salvage

Michael Roemer's *Nothing But a Man* and Jörn Donner's *To Love*, mainly for the magnificent performances by Abbey Lincoln in the former and Harriet Andersson in the latter. But Roemer's film (a sort of black man's *Marty* about a young Negro couple trying to make a life for themselves in Birmingham, Alabama), although beautifully observed and understated, is just a shade conventional; and Donner's, packed with derivative tricks, to my taste looks like Godard without the genius. Then, to add to the gloom, trouble started brewing over the fringe screenings.

It all began with a sample of higher Japanese lunacy called *Day Dream*, about the erotic fantasies of a dental patient when the girl being drilled in the next chair faints, and he goes under anaesthesia with a hazy last vision of the dentist loosening her clothing. Those who saw it talked delightedly of a splendidly hilarious piece of naive erotica, which the producers defended with charming puzzlement against the charge of pornography by insisting that it couldn't be because it wasn't *real*. Two days later, however, grapevine rumours (muttering darkly about Jesuit plots), announced that the film had been seized by the police, the cinema closed, and the manager arrested. A showing of Munk's *Passenger* was subsequently cancelled; an audience for Joseph Lisbona's *La Loutre* waited angrily outside another cinema while the manager peered timidly from behind a locked grille pleading that he dare not show it; and hopeful Greeks who planned to show George Saris's *Monemvasia* were unable to get their hands on the film.

In the midst of all this frustration, it was a real pleasure to turn to the splendid Scandinavian Retrospective, which assembled thirty-five features as well as numerous shorts and extracts. Two delightful comedies by Stiller, *Thomas Graal's Best Film* (1917) and *Thomas Graal's Best Child* (1918), not only reveal Sjöström as a brilliant comedian, but have an astonishingly light touch, and are surely the source book for Lubitsch and the American Thirties. The same director's *Gunnar Hedes Saga* (1923), celebrated for its superb sequences of the reindeer trek and stampede across the snows, again has a swiftness and delicacy of touch, particularly in the discreetly modern handling of the hero's madness, which one would not have suspected from the rather heavy *Herr Arne's Treasure*. Another revelation was Holger-Madsen, whose *Himmelskibet* (1917) is a science fiction fantasy halfway between Méliès and Fritz Lang, and has a particularly appealing vision of Mars as a great lawn completely covered with girls in white robes and garlands, all waving cheerful welcome. Then, Benjamin Christensen, known mainly for his *Witchcraft Through the Ages*, and generally spoken of as a one-shot director; but the last reels of his spy story, *The Mysterious X* (1913), reveal a sophistication in lighting, camera movement and editing far in advance of Griffith or even Feuillade. Christensen is obviously a very important figure, and one would dearly love to see his other films, particularly those he made in Hollywood with Lon Chaney and Norma Shearer. The most striking feature of all these films (seen to perfection in Sjöström's *Vem Dömer?*) is the extreme subtlety of the interior lighting. Landscape, offset by the natural brilliance of Scandinavian light, is a familiar feature of their early cinema, but who discovered the technical secret which enabled them to outstrip everyone else in artifice?

Towards the beginning of the second week things perked up a lot with the arrival of Alain Jessua's *La Vie à l'Envers*, already praised by Richard Roud from Cannes. Remarkably assured for a first film, it is not only very funny and a constant pleasure to watch, but manages to impose its private vision with complete conviction. The hero, disappearing further and further into contemplative solitude, ends up in an asylum, sitting on the floor and gazing with quiet absorption at the fascinating detail of a white wall. If this is madness, one feels, how nice to be mad; perhaps, even, one already is. Right at

the opposite pole from Jessua's quiet burrowing, Jonas Mekas's *The Brig*, filmed with a hand-held camera direct from the Living Theatre's stage performance of Kenneth H. Brown's play, makes an all-out onslaught on one's senses. For seventy minutes, the inmates of a Marine Corps detention cell are brutally battered in mind and body by sadistic guards, and the audience is subjected to a non-stop rush of frenziedly regimented movement, screamed dialogue, and the thud of fist on flesh. In spite of an inherent distaste for the works of Jonas Mekas, I must admit that *The Brig* makes its point: one emerges exhausted and appalled by this document of savage, conscious brutality. Mekas's camera, roving in and out among the actors, throws the action full in the audience's face; but the impressions received are powerful rather than meaningful, and one can't help feeling that some sort of distanciation, such as a performance on a stage affords, might have helped the intended connections (with concentration camps, etc.) to emerge more clearly. At Venice the film was misleadingly shown under a documentary label, and it is some tribute to the Living Theatre's actors that—much to American indignation—European journalists were eagerly asking just how Mekas had obtained permission to film this record.

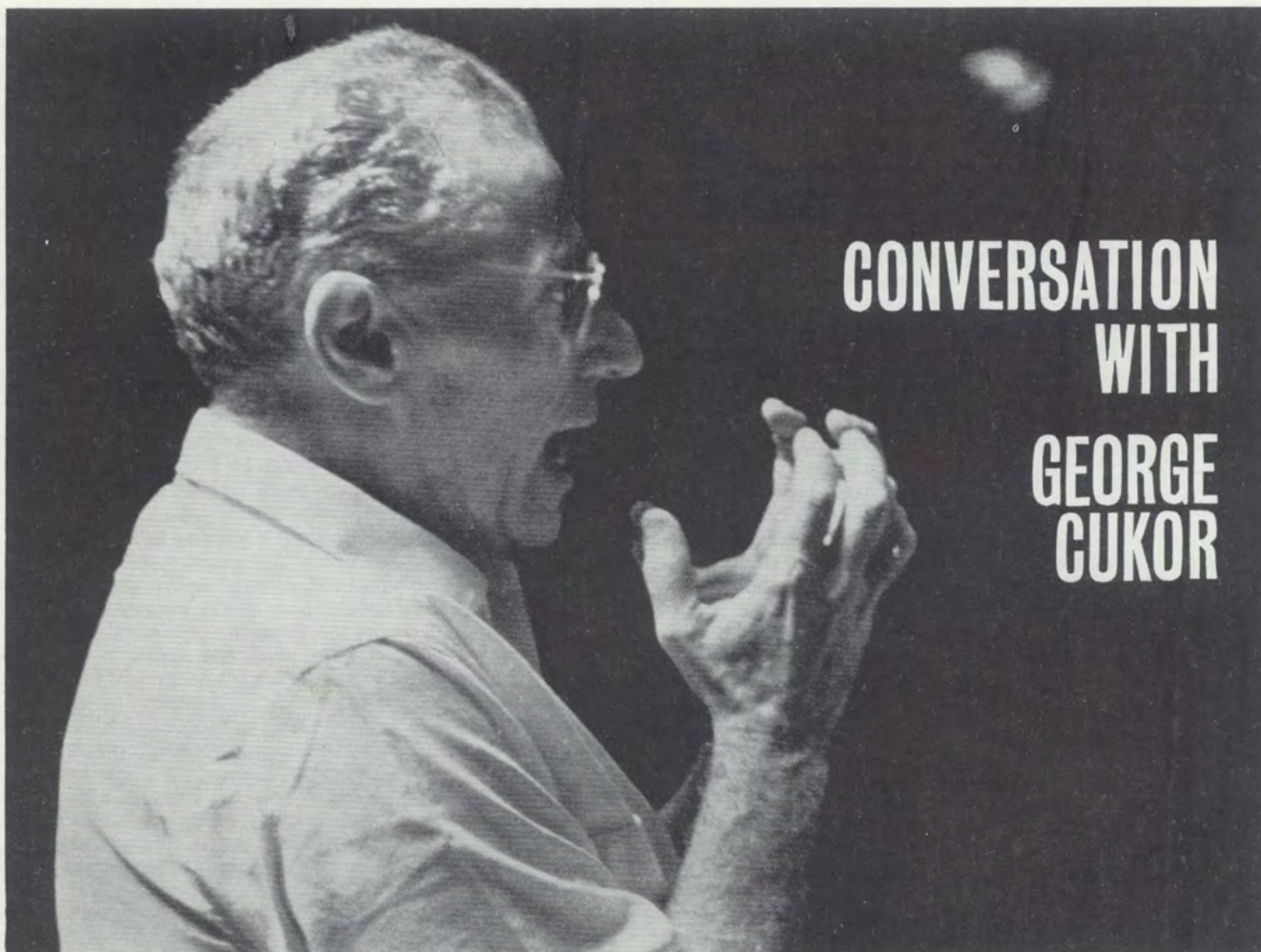
Then, Pasolini's eagerly awaited *Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo*. Forebodings aroused just before the screening by a statement circulated by "Pro Civitate Christiana" to the effect that the film was O.K. for Catholics on all levels, proved to be well founded. In theory, Pasolini's conception is good: a sort of *cinéma-vérité* story of Christ, with the sermons delivered harshly and flatly, the miracles treated as simple matters of fact, and all the characters—Mary, Joseph, the apostles, Christ himself—seen as rough, untutored peasants. The film might have been an interesting Marxist confrontation between corrupt materialism and humble simplicity. In fact, however, Pasolini seems to have slipped over the edge into sentimentality, to make a film which could easily replace a parish Nativity play. His Christ (played by a Spanish student), usually seen in close-up as a vision of mistily limpid eyes under a virginal white shawl, reeks too much of piety; the Angel of the Lord looks like a Botticelli angel rather than a peasant girl; and there are some dreadful errors of judgment, notably the walking on the waters (with Christ perched unsteadily on a half submerged raft), and Herod's massacre of the children (with dummies tossed into the air as in some Cottafavi send-up spectacle). To me, the result is yawning boredom, relieved only by the harshly dusty Roman countryside, and by a few odd scenes. The film, it appears, was heavily cut before the press show, then cut again before the gala performance the same evening; it could stand further pruning.

So far (the two biggest guns, Antonioni's *Deserto Rosso* and Godard's *La Femme Mariée*, had, alas, not been shown at the time of writing), the outstanding film of the festival was

(Continued on page 210)



"IL VANGELO SECONDO MATTEO": THE DANCE OF SALOME.



CONVERSATION WITH GEORGE CUKOR

JOHN GILLETT and DAVID ROBINSON

CUKOR: I'm touched and slightly amused, but really touched, at the kind of attention that is being paid to my work by a number of distinguished magazines. I don't know who it was—perhaps Melville or somebody—who had lived a long time, and they suddenly discovered him. And can you imagine, they said, the old man is *still alive*. And there is a short story, I think one of Aldous Huxley's, about an artist who had been painting about thirty-five years before. They suddenly discovered this old gentleman, and dragged him out and put him in a dress suit, and he made a speech which was startlingly ridiculous and at the same time very touching, and then he dropped dead. I hope I'm not going to drop dead . . . but there we are.

J.G.: *What do you feel about the kind of reviews your films get in a magazine like Cahiers du Cinéma? About the sense, for instance, that once they have adopted a director then he can do no wrong?*

Well, I am almost in the Valhalla, I think. But I must say, and this is really rather caddish, that some of my fellow gods . . . I don't quite understand why they are enshrined. *Jalousie du métier*, perhaps, but . . . At the Cinémathèque in Paris their great film, though I don't agree with them, is *A Star is Born*. It's shown over and over again, and sometimes it breaks and they lose a few frames, and then they come up and say "they cut it short; there are several frames missing." I am very touched because they really do like the film. But I

think the French critics are wrong about a great many things, and it is rather disconcerting when they interview you because they have already written the answers and you are expected to conform. They say things like "and then you returned to comedy . . ." and it is all rather as though you were reading your own obituary. You hadn't been aware that for ten years you had directed comedy and then for ten years had done something else.

J.G.: *Even if it does sound like an obituary, can we begin with your very early days in Hollywood? Your entry into films came after rather a distinguished period in the theatre—the Lyceum Theatre in Rochester.*

That was during the summer. I ran a stock company, a repertory theatre, but before that I had been assistant stage manager and stage manager for several years, in New York and on tour. Then I began directing in New York, working with Gilbert Miller, and during the summer I ran this company at Rochester. We used to get some distinguished actors down from New York to work with the resident company. Then, when talkies came in, they got everyone who had anything to do with the theatre out to Hollywood, and I went out first as a dialogue director. They still called the dialogue "titles"—"he speaks this title here, then she speaks that title there," and so on. I was working for Paramount, and my first job was on one of the very early talkies, a film called *River of Romance*, an adaptation of Booth Tarkington's novel

Magnolia. As I remember, there were six cameras which were all put into booths, since the cameras were still not insulated for sound. And of course there was very little camera movement. That was the beginning.

D.R.: *Can we go back to the theatre for a moment. I noticed that in 1926 you directed a play based on The Great Gatsby. Did Fitzgerald see it; did he approve?*

That was an interesting version done by a very experienced old boy called Owen Davis. It wasn't very colourful to read, but it all worked beautifully on the stage and you could get some effective performances in it. Fitzgerald was abroad at the time, but I'd met him before that, when I was doing a play with Laurette Taylor and we arrived at Wilmington, Delaware, where he was living with his wife. We had supper with them, and it was all rather Bohemian, and mad, and fraught, and I remember that Mrs. Fitzgerald's way of calling the servants was to honk on an auto horn. It all seemed very gay and giddy, and at the same time very staged. When I got to know Fitzgerald later in California he was a very quiet, muted man: all the zip had gone out of him.

D.R.: *Your other work as dialogue director was on All Quiet on the Western Front?*

Yes, I worked with Milestone. I did all the tests—I was always shooting tests—and then I did a great deal of work on the intimate scenes, including most of the early scenes with the boys.

D.R.: *That is interesting, because the acting there has a very special quality, a kind of poetic feeling that goes beyond realism. The death in the hospital, for instance, where Paul says the prayer, is wonderfully moving, and not at all realistic.*

Not realistic... I don't think we were aware of that: I think we tried to be realistic. But it was all very simply done, and then they were in fact very young. I certainly had a lot to do with those intimate scenes, in fact you could say that I directed them. But the extraordinary vigour and power of that film was all Milestone's. He is a first-class director and a wonderful cutter.

J.G.: *Could you clear up an age-old question that always turns up in the history books. Who actually directed One Hour with You?*

Lubitsch was doing another picture at the time, and I was assigned to direct *One Hour with You*. I don't think they were very pleased with my work—with the best intentions in the world I couldn't have directed it as Lubitsch did—and first he supervised it and then after a few weeks he really took over. It was a very painful time for me because I stood there more or less on the sidelines and watched my Ps and Qs. Certainly it was wholly a Lubitsch picture in style. The script, after all, was his, and I suppose that he directed most of it. I gave what help I could, though. I was there all the time.

J.G.: *It still looks very good, and the interesting thing is that it seems all of a piece. It looks as though it had all been made by one man.*

It was a charming thing. Lubitsch planned everything, in the way he wrote it, and then he would shoot it in his own way. I did the best I could, but apparently it wasn't good enough. I was just a dialogue director, just starting to direct, and then I defied Mr. Schulberg, the head of Paramount, and in fact sued the company when they didn't want to give me a screen credit. But what remains for me interesting about the whole experience is that you have to have a very thick skin, and that is something I wasn't aware of at the time. You have to have enough determination to put up with an awful lot of nonsense. And you must not recognise when you are defeated: you mustn't let it do you in. I have had the experience since of being removed from pictures several times—I was taken off *Gone with the Wind*, of course, and that apparently was the end; I really ought to have gone home and shot myself after that—and there was a similar thing once with Louis B. Mayer. I remember speaking at that time to a friend of mine, a man

called Thaw who was in charge there. "I don't take Mr. Mayer's opinion of me and my work," I said to him; and then I added rather defiantly, "There's a great big crack right up the front of this building, and I'll be around long after Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer is finished." And it so happens that in a way I was right... But it seems so odd when you are under contract to a studio. It's as though they were car dealers who kept the cars in the window, and who liked to walk around every day and give the bumpers a good kick. Mayer, though, was a man who either liked or disliked people. He was an awfully smart showman, and he probably just didn't think I was much good.

J.G.: *What was it like to work for a big company like M-G-M during the Thirties? Then they had all the big contract people, the art directors like Cedric Gibbons, and cameramen like Harry Stradling, Joseph Ruttenberg and so on, and you were always working with more or less the same group of people. Who was really in charge?*

As long as Irving Thalberg was alive, he was in charge. He was a most original man, who demanded perfection, and he died at 37, really just at the beginning of his success, or he would have gone on to extraordinary things. He had the beginnings of taste. When we were doing *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, he would talk a great deal about the play; not as a scholar—which he wasn't, particularly—but as a showman. And it was always fascinating. He was full of insights. I remember that at one time when we were working on the script of *Camille*, he said, "They plan a marriage, and this should be done as though they were planning a murder..."

It wasn't really a police state, and when you had once accepted the assignment and the casting, they wanted to do the best they could for you. They never tried to make you go about things in a more obvious way. But of course there were limitations. For example, I had done *Little Women* at RKO, with sets and costumes by Hobe Erwin and Walter Plunkett, and I thought that was very sensibly and tastefully handled. When I got to Metro to do *David Copperfield*, they styled it in a rather unattractive way and I had tussles with them. The heads of the departments all became friends of mine, but they

"DAVID COPPERFIELD", FREDDIE BARTHOLOMEW AND EDNA MAY OLIVER (BETSY TROTWOOD).





GARBO IN "CAMILLE".

were martinets. Like a lot of people who have been in the forefront of the movement, if they stick to it they become rather old-fashioned.

J.G.: *Little Women* was shown here recently on television. One thing that struck me particularly in watching it was that already, even in the early Thirties, it seemed to have your visual styling.

I remembered *Little Women* as being rather better than it was. But I think that we did capture just what has made that book live—the real vigour of it, and that love of family. And of course Katharine Hepburn cast something over the film: a sort of innocence and strength that was quite remarkable and very touching. They did the book again years later and it came out as just a sentimental shambles.

But the point about Louisa M. Alcott's novel is that it isn't simply a sentimental valentine. It's very New England, very high-minded, and the characters are all very strong. Very often with these Victorian works we tend to think that it's all sentimental and romantic imaginings. You read *Lady Windermere's Fan*, for instance, with all that business about getting the letters, and you think "Oh, that's nothing but plot, plot, plot." But, truth to tell, women *did* have reputations and they could have been ruined. Life changes. To me the point about a book like *Little Women* is that it seems accurate as a reportage of its period.

D.R.: *Do I understand that you weren't very happy with the production values of David Copperfield? It has always been one of my favourite literary adaptations, and what is extraordinary is that it seems pictorially so undated.*

The acting was fairly good, but it wasn't really so sensitively done, so right and true as *Little Women*. But one thing that picture does have: those Dickens characters are not cartoons. I've seen other Dickens adaptations in which it seems to me that they tend to stylise everything, and so to dehumanise the people. But I think we did succeed in making our Uriah Heep and Betsy Trotwood human and believable—which wasn't all that easy.

D.R.: *Was the casting of W. C. Fields as Micawber your idea?*

No. Originally Charles Laughton was going to play the part, but he decided that he didn't want to. He said, "I'm not

good natured . . ." He ought to have been marvellous; he looked Micawber to the life. All the same, he was quite right: he didn't want to play it, and in fact he did not know how to play it. So he was removed—or, rather, he removed himself—and Fields took over. He was a little taken aback by the whole experience. He had been a vaudevillian, a music-hall artist who had never really played a part in his life, but he was a big enough figure for it not greatly to matter that he was wrong in all sorts of ways. He brought in any number of old gags, but the spirit was somehow Micawber's. He would be standing at his desk writing, for instance, and he would ask if he could have a cup of tea next to the inkwell; and then he'd ask for a wastepaper basket on the floor. So, naturally, he would put his pen in the tea and then get his foot caught up in the basket. He was a charming and inventive man, not too honest, not too easy to know, and the character of Fields and the character of Micawber were so close that it made for rather an interesting reading of the part.

People complained that the second half of *Copperfield* was not as good as the first. But, after all, the second volume of the book is not nearly as appealing as the first, and you have to face the fact when you are working on it. My feeling is that when you are dealing with anything classic or semi-classic, you mustn't try to iron it all out. Find out what makes the thing survive, and do that. Keep the vigour, keep the point of it, but don't try to improve it out of all shape. In *Little Women*, for instance, the girl Beth seems to die about three times over, and the hero is introduced only in the last quarter of the picture. It wouldn't have been difficult to reconstruct it, but the trick is always to make a movie of something without rending it apart, without violating the original.

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D.R.: *What about some of your other literary adaptations—Romeo and Juliet, for instance?*

Romeo and Juliet we just did. We didn't have anything like that famous credit "additional dialogue by Sam Taylor"

JEAN SIMMONS IN "THE ACTRESS".



from the Pickford-Fairbanks *Taming of the Shrew*. Perhaps if I did it again I would go about it a little differently, but all the same I think it was a splendid effort. It didn't have the Italianate dash and vigour it should have done; Norma Shearer was not, of course, a Shakespearean actress—though she did the potion scene marvellously. But I think that it's moving, and often quite beautiful pictorially.

D.R.: And *Camille*? That seems to me in its way a perfect film, one that I can always see with complete satisfaction.

Camille, I suppose, is the happy meeting of an actress and a part. The play is such an old warhorse that I wouldn't have thought of doing it without Garbo; but somehow that ill-starred, tainted creature is something that she has in her face, and that makes it unique. And, of course, she played it so well. Armand has always been called a bad part, because you can have the finest actor in the world playing it and still you can't forgive him for the way he behaves. It only works if he is really young, as Robert Taylor was, and then the whole thing seems to take on a point.

Thalberg offered me a choice of pictures, one of them *Marie Walewska*, and I chose to do *The Lady of the Camellias*. When it came out, however, neither Garbo nor I was nominated for an Oscar, and I remember that in the trade papers the film received rather a bad notice. There were three big pictures previewed that night, and *Camille* came third on the list.

D.R.: Did you tell Garbo how to say "I'm strong", or did she know? I mean that wonderful moment in the death scene when she insists on getting out of her bed...

I've forgotten it... But, you know, you influence people in a very curious way. An interesting thing happened, for instance, with *A Star is Born*. When Judy Garland finished doing the scene in her dressing-room, in which I thought she was remarkable, I said to her, "Well, that's rather like Laurette Taylor." And Marguerite Taylor, who later wrote a book about her mother, saw the same resemblance. Judy had never seen Laurette Taylor, but I was a great admirer of Laurette, and unconsciously I suppose that I must have passed something of her on to Judy. And that, very often, is the way one stimulates an actor's imagination. At the time we were shooting *Camille* my mother had just died, and I had been there during her last conscious moments and I suppose had a special awareness. I may have passed something on to Garbo, almost without realising it. You don't tell her how to say "I'm strong," but somehow you find yourself creating a climate in which she can say it that way.

J.G.: How about *A Star is Born* itself? How much is missing from the version we saw here?

I think about half an hour. You see, when the story was finished they dropped in a great big divertissement called *Born in a Trunk*, which tells the story all over again, and which I didn't shoot. Partly to accommodate this they made cuts, including some charming songs, some very funny scenes between Judy Garland and James Mason, little episodes building up the relationship between them. There were scenes when they meet again when she is living in a very shabby boarding-house downtown in Los Angeles; a scene on the way to the film première, when she's so nervous that she jumps out of the car and is sick, all amongst some oil derricks; and a scene I was very fond of when they play a love scene on the sound stage, with a live microphone going so that the whole thing is played back to them.

J.G.: Who actually directed the *Born in a Trunk* number?

That was done by the choreographer, I think. And Gene Allen (production designer), George Hoyningen-Huene (colour adviser) and Roger Edens had a good deal to do with it. It fits in quite well, but it seems to me to tell another story—or, at least, a story within a story. The main flow of the narrative was very powerful and well developed, and anything which interferes with that flow seems to me wrong. Certainly the film was too long in its original form, but Moss



"HELLER IN PINK TIGHTS". SOPHIA LOREN AND ANTHONY QUINN.

Hart (the scriptwriter) and I could have cut it in such a way that the cuts wouldn't have been perceptible... Was it Mary Tudor who said "Calais is written on my heart"? Perhaps the cutting of *A Star is Born* is the only thing that has really upset me.

J.G.: There is the painful question of *Gone with the Wind*.

That's really not a painful question at all. I prepared it for about a year; then I shot it for some months (and most of that stuff is still in the picture); and then I was removed from it. I don't really know why. Selznick was and is a good friend of mine, and until then we had worked together very successfully. Then he started something I didn't like very much: he would come on to the set while we were filming a scene, and supervise the actual shooting. And I believe that Gable thought for some reason that I didn't understand him, or wouldn't give him the proper breaks. There was a lot of tension about the picture, and everyone concerned with it was worried. But these are things that happen, whereas when a picture has been cut it still rankles.

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J.G.: What about a much more recent film of yours which was also cut, this time partly by the censor: *The Chapman Report*?

That was not perhaps a distinguished picture, but it was adroit and diverting and there were some interesting performances in it. The episodes involving the frigid woman, and the respectable one who has an affair, all explored rather fully and, in the circumstances, rather honestly. We had a preview which went very well, and then it was sent over to Mr. Zanuck, who did what I thought was a most horrendous job of cutting it up. It's terrible to seem to make these excuses, but certain pictures have suffered in this way. It was my idea to get four rather appetising girls, to counteract the vulgarity. You had Claire Bloom, for instance, playing a rather high-minded woman who did ignoble things; but in the cutting they removed whatever they thought wasn't lurid, so that the justification for her was cut out, and it became the conventional, sensational thing. Then, sure enough, the censor jumped on it. For pure, lurid stuff the rape scene was fascinating; because of that, they cut it out. Mr. Trevelyan seemed to have prejudged it, and to have judged it on matters of taste.

And that I don't like at all . . . And, anyhow, I don't really understand it. I look at foreign pictures, foreign film magazines, and everyone is always naked, always rolling around and biting each other. And meanwhile Hollywood has this bad reputation.

J.G.: *A great many of your films have been about women, and there is an element of social satire which seems to run through your characterisations. I'm thinking especially of films like The Women and The Philadelphia Story. Would you say that these portrayals reflect to some extent your feelings about a certain type of American woman?*

Well some of them, yes. You get it out of the air, you get it out of the text, and there is a way of doing it without making it seem gritty, or vulgar, or disagreeable. *The Women* is tough, in its way, but it's not a great masterpiece; it's rather a romp, laid on with a great trowel. A lot of women set a city on its ear: the Merry Wives of wherever it is. But when I am at work on something the text dictates the tone, and so that is always changing.

D.R.: *Do you feel consciously that your career has. . . Ended?*

D.R.: . . . *that it falls into rather distinct periods. The literary adaptations of the Thirties, the light comedies of the Forties and early Fifties, and so on?*

There are directors who leave their impression on everything they do: you can always tell a Hitchcock picture, or a Lubitsch picture, or a Lean picture. Now I, having started in the theatre, am for better or worse an interpretative director, and the text always determines the way I shoot a picture. I suppose there is some stamp on my work, but you can't see it right away, or at least I can't myself. I don't think that I have an axe to grind, or that there is any consistent social satire, or that I want to show the American woman in any particular light. We have mentioned the innocence of *Little Women*, for instance, which is something entirely different. And take *The Actress*: that was a very romantic story, another period piece, set in 1917 and very accurately written in that it reflects exactly the way people spoke. Ruth Gordon, who wrote it, is of course an actress, and as a matter of fact her first job was as one of the children in Maude Adams' *Peter Pan*. Once when she was shopping with two girls from the company the stage manager ran into them. "In Miss Adams' company," he said, "you must always wear hats and gloves." It was a whole different way of thinking.

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J.G.: *You seem to get on particularly well with English actresses: Jean Simmons, for instance, in this film.*

I don't know. I suppose so. Jean Simmons in my opinion is the only English actress who can get an American accent absolutely right. Vivien Leigh of course did a Southern accent, in which it's easier to disguise the English voice. But the only thing Jean Simmons got wrong in *The Actress* was when she sang "Beautiful Lady", and she would say "It's bee-ee-eeen." All the rest was absolutely accurate. There is no nonsense of any kind about Jean, but she does have one trick: when she's nervous in rehearsal, she has a way of giggling. There's one scene in this picture where Spencer Tracy, who played her father, is telling her off for buying an expensive magazine. He had to be in a very bad temper, rather terrifying, and Jean giggled at him. Tracy was amused about it, saying, "Well, I know I'm lousy, but why does she have to laugh at me?" I got them to keep it in: in the scene she giggles at him out of sheer terror when he is bawling her out. And that is the sort of thing that happens in pictures: suddenly they take on the texture of life. I remember watching a couple walking once in Madrid. They walked along a bit, and then they stopped, and then they walked along again. I thought, now, if I were doing this as a scene in a movie I would make them walk romantically, hand in hand. But the real thing was so much more romantic . . . In a picture with Jack Lemmon and Judy Holliday, during a quarrelling scene, I said to Jack "I don't believe that for one

damn minute, what you're doing. What are you doing?" He said: "Oh, you couldn't possibly use that, I get the cramps." So I said, "Do that," and at the height of the fight he suddenly sat down and had these awful stomach cramps. Which was absolutely real and funny.

J.G.: *Most of your recent films have been in colour, and there is usually a credit to Mr. Hoyningen-Huene as colour consultant. What exactly does your collaboration with him involve, and how do you work together?*

Hoyningen-Huene is a very distinguished photographer, I believe originally a pupil of Steichen's, who for years did photographs for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. He's a man of great taste and cultivation, with enormous experience in photography, and he has influenced my use of colour very much. Since *A Star is Born* we have worked steadily together, along with the art director Gene Allen, though Huene—alas and alack—wasn't with us on *My Fair Lady*. As to how we work . . . I really don't know. We discuss the visual things, and Gene Allen designs them, and we look at it. But the great thing is always the *absence* of colour. The film itself has so much colour in it that the trick is to remove colour: to use it only when you really need it, and very sparingly elsewhere.

J.G.: *That is particularly striking, I think, in Heller in Pink Tights, which is a real colour film.*

That was a film which lent itself to colour treatment, and it was very much Hoyningen-Huene's work. Visually and in the performances it was very diverting, even if it wasn't a very good story, and it annoyed me that the picture was passed over so lightly in America. Paramount had no real faith in it, they did some stupid cutting, and then it wasn't even released properly. It's a great pity, because among other things it seems to me a very interesting view of the West. I believe that the West really did look like that.

J.G.: *You have said that the style of your films changes with the text, but I would have thought that the performances were a constant factor. It may be a risky thing to say, but I think one would recognise a Katharine Hepburn performance in one of your films.*

Really, the way people behave in them . . . ? Do you think she is better or worse in my pictures?

J.G.: *Perhaps simply more relaxed. And another thing which must obviously come from your theatre experience is the very distinctive timing of the dialogue scenes.*

I'm not particularly aware of that, although you are probably right. Especially with *My Fair Lady*, because that is of course all dialogue; and dialogue which you have to guard very jealously, even after you've got it on the screen, because there is the problem of the dubbing. This is the first time I have worked on 6-track, 70mm., and they do something there which they call "swinging the sound"—moving it, that is, so that when it's played over the various loudspeakers scattered around the theatre it seems to follow the actor. This is extremely good, but the catch is that it can produce some very subtle distortions in the relations of sounds. They know all about music; but, curiously enough, the actual tone of voice is extremely difficult to detect, even for the most experienced sound man.

I would hear these things, for instance, and I'd say, "But you've changed the whole quality of it: the whole thing has been ironed out, and the people sound quite different." And they would say, "No, no, no." Then I'd say, "Well, I don't think this sounds very funny." Because when I look at a film it is always emotionally, never from the technical point of view. Then I'd run it again, and run the original, and point out that somehow in the process instead of Audrey saying "How do you do?" in a rather affected way, she now said it quite ordinarily. That is something only the human ear can finally judge, and something you have to watch very carefully. And the better the actor, the more you lose. For instance, Rex Harrison's method here would be to use sudden bursts of energy and enormous verbal acrobatics. And if those things

are ironed out, you miss a great deal of the wit. Sometimes the quality of the voice itself is involved: if you take out the upper registers you lose some of the fun; if you take out the lower registers, some of the emotion. Or take an actress like Judy Holliday: she hits the note right in the centre, and if you vary it in any way you are going to lose something. It's really true of all good actors.

D.R.: *What about the adaptation of My Fair Lady?*

The adaptation is by Alan Lerner, and we've also based it a little on the Shaw script for the movie *Pygmalion*, since there were some inventions there, such as the language expert, that we wanted to use. The great thing is that it seems to work, it's easy to do, and like all good things it seems to support and carry you. It's very grateful to work on. But it is soon going to be shown, and this is the time for an instant humbleness on the part of the director concerned. You've planned it and worked on it. At this moment, all you can say is, here it is.

D.R.: *You are supremely—how ought one to put it?—an impresario, or a medium, for the great ladies. Or perhaps you made them the great ladies. But at any rate you either translated*

to the screen, or created, these marvellous, sacred . . .

Don't say cows. I really don't know what it is. I always say, rather faintly, "well, of course there are men in the pictures too." I've worked with a wonderful series of actors—Jack Barrymore, Tracy, Jimmy Stewart and all of them. About the ladies: it may seem more apparent because they are such dazzling creatures, but I take as much trouble with the waiter who comes in with a tray as I do with them. I think you can tell a director's work not in the way he gingers up this or that girl, but in the overall tone of the picture, the way the people in it behave. Adrian, the designer, once told me that when his clothes were photographed for the fashion magazines he never wanted to have them worn by an actress. Because if you photograph an actress in a dress, the actress comes through: she can't help it. These ladies are so high-powered in every way, and so photogenic, and so used to projecting, that the director's work with them becomes more immediately apparent than when some drab or uninteresting person is involved. But perhaps I do have some way of charming these great ladies. I don't know.

Text transcribed and edited from a tape-recording.

ON THE SET. "MY FAIR LADY".





"LA PEAU DOUCE": JEAN DESAILLY AND FRANÇOISE DORLÉAC.

FILM REVIEWS

LA PEAU DOUCE

TRUFFAUT'S *LA PEAU DOUCE* WAS greeted with a certain coolness at Cannes. Was it really understood? The film is about an editor of a literary review, Pierre Lachenay, who falls in love with an air hostess while attending a conference in Portugal. Back in Paris, he quarrels with his wife; then a literary gathering at Rheims offers an opportunity to take the girl to the country. For a time she is impressed, but his fretting anxiety about what people will say makes her decide to leave him, just as he makes up his mind and offers to marry her. Suggested by a news item, the story ends in tragedy: he is shot in a crowded restaurant, and the wife is revenged.

The feeling was that Truffaut had sunk back into the conventional cinema which he once lashed so unmercifully, to make a film which might bear the signature of any old Bernstein-brand playwright. *La Peau Douce* (Gala), however, is a trap: there have been plenty of films about adultery, but few have ventured to take the mechanism so methodically to pieces. And Truffaut's characters can hardly be called conventional. Behind Lachenay's air of calm competence lurks indecision, weakness, diffidence (a diffidence close to that of *Tirez sur le Pianiste*, and one of the secret keys to Truffaut's world). The wife, normally presented as a resigned, mousy compendium of domestic virtues, is here alluring, voluptuous, eminently desirable, offering herself to her husband with the utmost provocation, her animal cries of pain etching in a striking portrait of a woman in love. Her final scene, after she has killed her husband, is unforgettable: amid the uproar of the restaurant she throws away the gun, sinks down, turns up the collar of her raincoat as if the chill of prison were already on her, and the terrible ghost of a smile flickers on her lips. Pierre, now, belongs to her. Equally unconventional, the other

woman is not the man-eating vamp of tradition, but a young girl, a charmingly unripe peach flattered to find herself not only noticed but wanted. She talks, however, endlessly, all about her family; she isn't terribly interested in money; and she says she won't mind too much if they can't make love for a month or two.

Another accusation: "It's a documentary about the gear-changes of the Citroën." But the extreme fragmentation of *La Peau Douce*, the ellipses, the quantity of extremely brief shots, are a sort of pointillisme in the direction, adding fascinating layers to the texture of the film. Truffaut is obviously an admirer of *Muriel* (the editing, the stress laid on meals, on sudden switches in light), and the influence of Resnais has deepened both the frontiers of his world and his style, taking him far beyond the eternal rapid panning of the days of *Les quatre cents coups*. The fragmented surface is matched by breaks in rhythm, and *La Peau Douce* is a subtle exercise in varying perspectives—in closeness and distance (Desailly's glasses), in hesitations and sudden rushes forward—with which Truffaut, like Resnais, addresses himself across his actors to the spectator in a quest for some enduring quality in happiness. Through his use of disconnection (light switches, camera shutters, gear-changes), Truffaut demonstrates the fragility of love; his world is one of objects and skins, of fleeting glances and fleeting contacts, as though love, in the steely world in which we live, were no more than two skins touching in a universe where things and people are sealed away from each other in impenetrable envelopes.

There is still much of the old Truffaut in *La Peau Douce*, in the quotations from Renoir, from himself, and the *Tirez*-style baroque couplets, but a new, mature Truffaut is revealed. To the qualities which we already know, his freshness, charm, delicacy and reserve, a new deliberation has been added, a sense of balance, an ability to construct his film round those key scenes in which he reveals himself most fully: the sequence in the aircraft with the hostess drawing a curtain to change her shoes; the wonderful scene of furtive glances in the lift, followed by Lachenay's exhilaration in his room, switching on all the lights one after another, then fumbling with the wrong key in the lock; the crumpled telegram; the mistress being jealous of the wife; the little girl trying on her mother's shoes; the kitten on the breakfast tray; the girl dancing, changing her jeans at a petrol station, having to be told "Not so loud" at the restaurant, and last seen from the top of a block of unfinished flats as she disappears for ever. A snapshot in a viewfinder, the whirr of a delayed-action shutter heard over the wife's discovery of the photographs. These are some of the new departures in the film.

The weaknesses are self-evident. There is a certain lack of conviction in the background details of an intellectual who directs an avant-garde review from an attic but lives the private life of a big businessman; and rather than the final shooting *à la* Godard, I would have preferred an ending which left Lachenay abandoned by both women. But these faults are small. The film shows what Truffaut could have achieved (and will achieve) with a trio of actors as fine as Françoise Dorléac. Jean Desailly and Nelly Benedetti are excellent, but Françoise Dorléac reaches beyond mere performance. One would swear that Truffaut had talked the role over endlessly with her, injecting it piece by piece, shaping gradually until the character herself took over, inventing her own dialogue and living the film as it went along. After the glittering lightning flashes of *Jules et Jim*, Truffaut has here made, in a film about adultery, his first adult film.

GILLES JACOB

LORD OF THE FLIES

ONE OF THE RICHEST QUARRIES mined by playwrights as diverse as Genet, Pinter and Rudkin has been the discovery that terror—real, primitive terror—can be a daylight thing: a simple masquerade, a cluttered room, a sunny orchard, grow suddenly malevolent because of the dark terrors people see, or think they see, behind them. The cinema has since made this territory its own with *The Servant* (Pinter again), and of course the most striking thing about William Golding's novel, on which *Lord of the Flies* (BLC/British Lion) is based, was its spiralling descent from normality into horror as the tropical paradise becomes a wild jungle, and the group of castaway schoolboys a tribe of howling savages.

In his adaptation, Peter Brook never cheats. It would have been only too easy to use haunting chiaroscuro for the first appearance of the imaginary "Beast" which so terrifies the boys. Instead, Brook shoots the scene in the grey light of dawn, and as the two boys peer across the hillside, we can see quite plainly that the swaying,

shapeless object, backed by white, serpentine billows, is a body dangling from a parachute: the terror lies not in this harmless object, but in the depths of fear it arouses in the boys. In the opening sequences, one feels that the film is going to work completely. Ralph and Piggy busily push their way through the undergrowth to emerge for their first glimpse of the friendly, tempting lagoon; they explore, swim, find the conch shell, and then, as its mournful note rings out to shatter the cosy world they have found for themselves, Brook cuts into his first long shot, revealing the two boys as tiny dots isolated on the deserted beach, timidly calling, "Hey, anyone there?" Then, as the boys begin to come together, security is shattered again by the sound of strange chanting. The camera lifts apprehensively to the empty shore, to discover a black, shapeless, crawling mass, which resolves itself into a line of cloaked choirboys chanting a "Kyrie Eleison".

Throughout, the variations in rhythms and distances are excellent, sharply establishing the boys' relationships to each other, to the friendly beach and lagoon, the mountain which they grow to fear, and the forest in which they gradually become absorbed. Characteristic of Brook's method is the sequence which opens with a close shot of the introspective Simon playing with a lizard, cutting into an overhead shot of a pig stealing through the forest, moving into the flurried excitement of the first hunt and kill, then cutting to a shot of boys floating lazily in the lagoon as an aeroplane roars overhead. The sequence is focal to the film, and beautifully illustrates the point of no return for two civilisations: in their excitement the hunters have let the signal fire go out, the plane disappears unaware, and they are condemned to remain on the island in a state of growing savagery which will come to a climax in Simon's murder.

Having got so far, however, poised on the edge of horror, *Lord of the Flies* never really clinches its nightmarish trap. All things considered, it probably couldn't. Golding's parable comes over clearly enough: the clash between personalities in a closed group, the herd desire for a leader, the release of savage instincts. It is the deeper resonances of the novel which are missing, and which one could not reasonably expect child actors to convey. For instance, when Simon comes face to face with the Lord of the Flies (the pig's head on a stick), what we see is not the vision of hell of the novel, but a small boy grimly brooding over a fly-bloated carcase; when he urges, "I think we ought to climb the mountain . . . What else is there to do?" it sounds more like the suggestion of a bored child than an obscure visionary feeling that only through this act can they reach salvation. More importantly, perhaps, the character of Roger fails to come across at all clearly; and Roger, in the novel, is the artist of cruelty, the sadist who bolsters up the man of power's regime.

Even so, it is astonishing how much of the novel has been captured, notably in the genuinely terrifying hysteria of the dance round the fires on the beach when the children, released from inhibition by their warpaint, drive themselves to a frenzy which results inevitably in Simon's murder. There is, too, a great deal of pleasure to be had from detail in the acting: Piggy's suddenly helpless, brushing gesture when robbed of his glasses; the slight twist to Roger's lip, half horror and half relish, when he finally dares to send the boulder crashing down on Piggy; the wondering gesture with which the little boy touches the naval officer's belt when rescue finally comes, before trying to launch into the rigmarole of name, address and telephone number which has now receded too far into the depths of his memory. Oddly enough, even when the boys—obviously having a whale of a time—laugh in the middle of a take, this is absorbed by the film as a reminder that these are children, playing a game and scarcely aware of their own cruelty: the laughter, set against the lush paradise of the island, is like the innocent, blameless grin of the schoolboy interrupted in the age-old pastime of pulling the legs off a fly.

TOM MILNE

DEVI

ON A FIRST GLANCE you might see *Devi* (Contemporary) as no more than a film with a thesis, Ibsen in an Indian setting. Kalikinkar, a devout and elderly aristocrat, believes his daughter-in-law, Doyamoyee, is an incarnation of the goddess Kali. He sets her up in a shrine; holy men worship her; a miracle apparently takes place when a dying boy revives; then another child, Doyamoyee's nephew, dies without medical care since the family think that the avatar alone can save him. In remorse Doyamoyee goes mad and believes she is pursued by demons.

The thesis, it seems, is clear; and in fact is nothing less than the latent theme of the Apu trilogy made articulate. Kalikinkar is

superstitious: the 'proof' of his daughter-in-law's divinity is a vision and a miracle. Such superstitions will finally destroy the old India; the 'proofs' and achievements of science will provide the only salvation. Satyajit Ray has tactfully set the action of his film a hundred years ago. All the same, the reference to modern India is plain. One can understand why some Hindus were infuriated by it, and why for a time it was not granted an export licence.

On the level of a thesis, then, the plot is both inexorable and tight. Ironies fall into place neatly—almost too neatly. A child is saved, so another child must die. Women are treated both as serfs and as idols; in any event, they are never allowed to be human beings. There are also a number of lesser ironies—for instance, Doyamoyee's husband, Uma, believes he is able to win any argument, yet is stunned into silence when confronted by his deified wife. In the Apu trilogy episodes were mainly related to each other by association; as the images of river and parched land recurred they took on the resonance, possibly the symbolism, of myth. In *Devi* episodes relate to each other with rationalist logic. So symbolism is played down; the river and landscape never become more than a beautiful backdrop to the action. Such a logic, moreover, requires motives to be highly plausible, a requirement which *Devi* doesn't entirely satisfy. Would an intelligent girl like Doyamoyee—and in Sharmila Tagore's performance she comes over as sharp as a pin—allow herself to be deified, even a hundred years ago? And would a husband as shrewd as Soumitra Chatterjee makes Uma allow himself to be so easily checked?

But—fortunately—*Devi* is much more than a tract. As always, Ray shows sympathy for the old order as well as for the new: Kalikinkar may be self-indulgent, yet he is also a man of his time—and, in the manner Chabi Biswas plays him, both good-natured and subtle; the pilgrims also are seen as impressive. On a closer look, indeed, *Devi* is anything but a tract. It has touches of a Greek tragedy in which Kali, the destroyer, enacts her necessary sacrifice; not without reason is Doyamoyee chased by furies across a sunlit field of flowers. Again, and most convincingly, you could see *Devi* as a study of the unconscious forces which hold a family together. Kalikinkar believes his daughter-in-law is a goddess because he misinterprets a dream; he doesn't realise how much he is in love with her. Uma is paralysed by his wife's deification because he relies on her in every way, and without her becomes indecisive. In this context we see the child's death as a family tragedy.

Ray establishes the domestic scene swiftly and with tact, above all in the two finely edited bedroom sequences. One remembers, in particular, the moments when Doyamoyee releases her husband

"LORD OF THE FLIES".



from a ravelled-up shirt, or massages Kalikinkar's feet while he fastidiously sucks at a hookah. The spacious palace is evoked by sounds: footsteps clatter across marble pavings, a parrot squawks, a silly nursemaid laughs hysterically from behind a door. The camera roves around beds shrouded in mosquito nets, in a grave twilight reminiscent of the final scenes of *L'Avventura*. Lovers require privacy, and the camera holds back; a kiss is seen from middle distance and in silhouette. Privacy and reticence: all the more poignant, then, that the sacrifice should be so public, and the catastrophe take place in streams of sunlight.

Ray's observation of this household may at times appear to be mannered; the child peeping through fingers while his aunt finds him a sweet looks tired in comparison with a similar scene in *Pather Panchali*. Still, *Devi* is about a high-born family, and the atmosphere needs to be a little precious. Like Renoir, and unlike most other directors, Ray has a real understanding of every class. He describes his aristocrats generously and without bias; yet he misses none of their foibles. I liked, especially, one vignette of two young patricians, moustachioed like Douglas Fairbanks Sr., riding home in a carriage—manicured nails, elegant gestures, yet bashful in conversation. As a structure *Devi* is deceptively lucid.

ERIC RHODE

LOVE WITH THE PROPER STRANGER

LOVE WITH THE PROPER STRANGER (Paramount) opens in an empty theatre in the dim early morning. A janitor puts out a notice, "Musicians' union-cards must be shown." Over the credits the auditorium slowly fills with shabby, out-of-work bandsmen, and the camera picks up Rocky as he enters, tough, casual, underfed, putting on a great show of nonchalance, as if work were the last thing he needed. An official mounts the stage and 'pages' wanted players. The floor is now a jostling, shouting mass. Suddenly Rocky is paged. He shoulders his way through the crowd to find, not an agent or a manager, but a flustered shop-girl who blurts out that she is pregnant.

Perhaps it is too much to expect any film to live up to the promise of such a start, but for a time it seems as if Robert Mulligan is going to keep it up. The confrontation of these two virtual strangers—it is obvious that he barely recognises her—is followed at a lively pace by background detail of their lives. Angie is a salesgirl in the pet department at Macy's; she lives in the affectionate but stifling bosom of her Italian-Catholic family, continually exasperated by the over-protective love of her elder brother. Her single night with Rocky was presumably a wild assertion of freedom. Rocky himself has

broken away from a similar family only to find a new kind of dependence. He is living with, and on, a nightclub singer. Angie wants nothing from him but the address of a 'doctor'. He arranges an appointment with a back-street abortionist, but is so overcome with disgust that he snatches her away at the eleventh hour. But now the plot shifts gear. The tone throughout has been light, but gradually the realistic comedy takes on a slick, artificial note. Rocky leaves Angie at his mistress's flat, and confesses all to her family. There follows a familiar piece of Italo-American histrionics, with Momma taking to her bed and the priest sent for. Rocky's self-righteous offer to make an honest woman of her is spurned by a furious Angie, who, penniless and pregnant, sets herself up in a luxurious apartment and a seductive wardrobe while, presumably as a form of insurance, she promises to marry an old suitor. Little is now left of the original naturalism of the characters, as the arbitrary plot pushes them predictably through the big love-hate scene on the way to the eventual sentimental close-up, ditching the unfortunate Italian fiancé without a word or a glance.

Arnold Schulman's script takes up a number of ideas, though it develops few of them. There is the difficult affection of parents and children, accentuated perhaps in a society where one generation are immigrants and the next fully integrated Americans. This is nicely illustrated in the telling little scene between Rocky and his parents, both of whom press money on him in secret and without being asked. His shame is complex and deep, but its many sides are indicated with a shrewd economy. The script touches on the effects of the romantic love image plugged by the mass media; on the sordid consequences for the innocent of casual promiscuity; on immigrant families—with inevitable echoes of Chayefsky and Arthur Miller. But the film's appeal is one of atmosphere rather than argument, and it is the atmospheric truth of the first half that provides most of its considerable charm. New York has never looked so real or so foreign. The dusty desolation of deserted streets at the rendezvous with the abortionist's tout, the strange urban recreation ground where Italian families picnic on Sunday afternoons behind a high wire fence, the curious ritual of the Musicians Union—these and the busy street scenes, shot by Milt Krasner in grainy grey, give an air of actuality which the plot, and to a lesser extent the players, cannot match.

As Angie, Natalie Wood looks just right, but it is a performance without depth, forgivable perhaps in a film whose weakness is its uncertainty of mood. Steve McQueen copes with the ambiguities more successfully. In spite of some slightly Methodish mannerisms, his very hip young jazzman is a flesh and blood character, and he plays with enough humour to retain sympathy at his most loutish and even to make Rocky's decent streak and his sudden vulnerability believable. Robert Mulligan's achievement as director is that he sustains the interest and expectation aroused by that brilliant beginning, keeping the film alive in detail even when his material fades away. Only the abruptness of the end seems inexplicable. Can the cameras have run out of film? Or perhaps there was some loss of confidence, a feeling confirmed by the distributors' uncharacteristically tentative publicity: "Almost certain to be the most talked about film of 1964 . . ."

BRENDA DAVIES

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

THE BEATLES' FILM *A Hard Day's Night* (United Artists) is a shining illustration of the often untenable maxim about the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. In the first place the Beatles themselves collectively, as a group and governing ungrammatically the singular verb, is (or are) clearly much more than simple Paul, John, George and Ringo. The same principle holds good for the film, which, broken down into its individual components, is pretty poor and insipid stuff. It is not in the conventional sense well written, having no construction to speak of and dialogues which no American director of musicals would look at and which are for the most part a lot less lively than the Beatles' own spontaneous repartee. It can hardly be called well directed, unless you believe that the rapid gyrations of a hand-held camera are intrinsically more exciting or cinematic than more usual methods, which is patently not true. Nor is it particularly well acted: in fact it is one of the merits of the film as I see it that it hardly seems to be acted at all. About the only good single aspect of the film is the songs, which are musically and verbally among the best that the group has produced.

"LOVE WITH THE PROPER STRANGER":
NATALIE WOOD AND STEVE MCQUEEN.



Eppur si muove: And yet it works. And it works, or so it seems to me, on a level at which most British films, particularly the bigger and more pretentious, don't manage to get going at all. To feel this one has only to compare it with a typical British quality production like *The Pumpkin Eater*—so carefully thought out, so meticulously scripted, so acted, so heavily 'directed', so thoroughly pedantic and ultimately so worked over that it becomes totally self-cancelling. *A Hard Day's Night*, though not exactly a *film d'auteur*, is in all other respects exactly the opposite. It is utterly slapdash, but it is consistent with itself. It works as a whole. It is coherent and has a sense of direction to it and a point.

The key to it lies in the personality, or non-personality, of the protagonists. They are not simply romantic idols, nor are they exactly comedians. They exist to a certain degree as individuals, but even more they function as a group. What they are presumably like as people in real life is not quite the same as the public image they cannot help projecting to the fans. At the same time the romantic group image is not totally synthetic. It has grown up much more naturally and spontaneously than is usual on the pop scene.

It is greatly to the credit of the makers of *A Hard Day's Night* (producer Walter Shenson; director Richard Lester) that they have realised all this, and built their film entirely around this situation. The compromise image they have produced may not please either the fanatics who must suffer their beloved idols being shorn of much of their glamour, or the earnest critics of pop-cult who would have preferred to see them cut down to size even smaller, but it does provide the kernel of an attractive movie. The skeletal dialogues (Alun Owen), the casual camerawork (Gilbert Taylor), the non-acting—none of which would pass muster in a respectable American musical—give the effect of an improvisation aimed at projecting a universally appealing image of the amiable happy-go-lucky creatures who are at the centre of it all, precariously poised between Liverpool, Soho and a fairyland of their own invention. The effect is consistently harmless and agreeable, and in all fairness one could hardly ask more than that.

The producers obviously felt that no more could be asked, and in box-office terms their calculation has proved right. But looked at for what it is, not for what it projects, *A Hard Day's Night* does provoke one or two further critical reflections. It is an unstable compound, which does indeed hold together, but precariously. There is a lot of British B-Picture badness about it which could and should have been eliminated. All the more so in that in its more inspired moments it strikes and nearly manages to exploit a vein of humour and occasionally pathos which is pure gold. The knockabout scenes in the field between rehearsals and the episode of Ringo on the loose with nowhere to go are in the classic tradition of screen comedy, and because they are so good only emphasise the mediocrity of much of the rest. This mediocrity in fact is in the formula, which is designed to protect the protagonists against themselves and against the consequences of being either too funny or too sad too long.

Equally mediocre are the scenes of the concert towards the end. Whether through cowardice or plain clumsiness these scenes have been totally emasculated. They are "distanced" sufficiently by intercutting shots of audience reaction and TV line-up and mixing to prevent the Beatles coming through direct as they would in the flesh. At the same time the distancing produces none of the devastating debunking effect of the candid camera in *Lonely Boy*. The television studio atmosphere is misjudged entirely, and the rapid pans across the audience capture none of the frenzy and hysteria which the Canadians extracted from a few well chosen close-ups. But teenage hysteria is not a pretty thing to look at, or even to think about, and the makers of *A Hard Day's Night* wanted a pretty film at all costs. In this they have succeeded, but at a price of honesty and with a wastage of talent which makes one wonder just how far it was all worth while.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

In Brief

THE UNSINKABLE MOLLY BROWN (M-G-M). What is awe-inspiring about *Molly Brown* is the way it swallows innumerable acres of plot whole, with the same impression of rather frightening vitality that the winners of pie-eating contests give in P. G. Wodehouse books. The sinking of the *Titanic* is only a closing mouthful to this anaconda of a script—and very suitable this gluttony seems to the woman celebrated by the film. The character, based vaguely on reality but also owing a lot to previous musical comedy heroines,



"THE UNSINKABLE MOLLY BROWN": DEBBIE REYNOLDS AS BAR-ROOM ENTERTAINER.

seems to covet almost everything; and she gets what she wants by guts, drive, and insensitivity. Her position midway between fact and fiction makes her a sort of Broadway-created contemporary American folk-heroine, contemporary American folk presumably feeling nostalgic about their legendary brashness. In her progress from frontierswoman to expatriate, Molly Brown is as beyond the scope of English middle-class thought as the Great Gatsby; and as an alien exotic, if not as an artistic creation, she is just as fascinating.

Debbie Reynolds is oddly cast in the part. A good dancer, and an adequate-to-good actress, she completely lacks the raw power which the role demands. Energy is insufficient, and she falls into the trap which waits for all the more feminine American comedienues, from Lucille Ball downwards: that of grossly exaggerating the mask of little-boy doggedness. Miss Reynolds is at her best when the script is at its worst—the moments when Molly Has Doubts. Otherwise 'indefatigable' is the safest adjective to describe her performance.

Musically there are two memorable numbers, and a few pleasant thumpy, blary tunes by Meredith Wilson; the choreography, though only occasionally exciting (polka and barn dance stuff mainly), is good enough and well enough performed to be shot consistently straight and in long takes, an incalculable relief nowadays. The supporting parts vary from being pleasantly adequate to being, at best, Martita Hunt, still imperturbably smiling with her customary lop-sided and quizzical grandeur. The script has moments of breath-taking banality, particularly in the dialogue of the Prince who loves Molly tenderly, but is also frequently likeable and amusing. Costumes and sets are splendid, especially the lavish, vulgar, clever, extremely red interior of Molly's showplace house in Denver. ("She likes red," her husband says defensively.)

All these components should add up to an attractive mediocrity, but in fact, as directed by Charles Walters, the film is more than that: not quite completely captivating, but nearly so. His use of colour is brash, clean and no-nonsense. In the bar Molly's green fights it out with the floozies' flesh pinks and pastels, against a background of browns and blues; everywhere the juxtaposition of shades is unsophisticated but eye-catching and telling. Equally effective and unpretentious, Harve Presnell's longest, loudest, most climactic note in his most romantic song is given, with unashamed lack of realism, at full volume while he, arms spread, is seen in longshot in the middle of a vast sweep of grass. It is an exhilarating shot, in spite of silliness. Molly's desperate study of the piano, leading into a rowdy bar-room number, is economically and tenderly handled; and the Browns' dancing and sight-seeing tour of

Europe, done in a few brief, pretty scenes, is competence at its highest level. Walters may never be quite as daring as he could be given his technical command, and therefore never quite as good as one might hope, but he certainly knows how to handle Panavision and Metrocolor with panache.—J. H. FENWICK

THE BEST MAN (*United Artists*). Adapted from his own play by Gore Vidal, *The Best Man* is wittily written, has a good plot and is directed by Franklin Schaffner with unpretentious efficiency. The fact that "as a film" it is not in any way remarkable need bother no one; indeed, avoiding self-consciously cinematic treatment to this extent might almost be said to be remarkable, the ultimate sophistication of movie technique. The structural skeleton of the original Broadway success is only faintly apparent; I suspect that, if anything, the film is an improvement, as it can sketch in the hysterical background to a national political convention with the graphic immediacy of a newsreel.

I have a weakness for films about American politics, especially those in which a President appears in person, and of these *The Best Man* is the most enjoyable I have seen after the incomparable *Dr. Strangelove*. (Now I come to think of it, this is too faint praise, as its only other competitors are *Seven Days in May*, *Advise and Consent*, and *Sunrise at Campobello*.) Part of the fun is always the Hollywood veteran fished out of retirement to impersonate Eisenhower or Roosevelt; in this case, Lee Tracy is magnificent as a cynical version of—perhaps—Truman. The story, basically, follows the standard pattern: a liberal candidate for presidential nomination (a bit of Kennedy, rather more of Stevenson, perhaps a dash of Rockefeller) comes up against a ruthless rightwinger (a lot of Nixon, a hangover from McCarthy, a prophetic proportion of Goldwater) and there is a dramatic battle of wits, bluff and blackmail, with a dying Grand Old Man on the sidelines and the inevitable homosexual smear (never, incidentally, attached to the liberal). Henry Fonda, not for the first time, plays the harassed progressive; and Cliff Robertson, the official screen representative of the young, heroic Kennedy, is wittily cast as the villain. Both are excellent. So is nearly everyone in the cast, which contains many rare old favourites (Ann Sothorn, Gene Raymond, and the briefest glimpse of Richard Arlen). Only Shelley Berman, in the Burgess Meredith role, gets out of the director's control and strikes a discordantly self-indulgent note.

What distinguishes *The Best Man* from the solemnity of *Seven Days in May*, the heavy-handedness of *Advise and Consent*, the sentimentality of *Sunrise at Campobello*, is the fact that it is a comedy. And comedy is the word: there is nothing here of the wild and bitter farce of *Dr. Strangelove*, the mannered irony of *The Manchurian Candidate*. *The Best Man* is a civilised and well-constructed comedy of manners, in which the humour springs from restraint rather than exaggeration. (This is why Berman's performance rings false.) Its message is that politics are necessarily corrupt; that compromise is inevitable if more serious dangers are to be avoided; that the best man never wins, and with any luck neither does the worst. In itself, the message is neither original nor profound, although no doubt true. Delivered in this low tone of voice, through the medium of a diverting and intelligent entertainment, it is unusually persuasive.—FRANCIS WYNDHAM

BEHOLD A PALE HORSE (*Columbia*). Fred Zinnemann's latest film, or something very like it, could have been made ten or more years ago when, for reasons that need little elaboration, its reception would almost certainly have been several degrees warmer than is possible today. Adapted by J. P. Miller from a novel by Emeric Pressburger, it is, by current standards, a conventional drama about the last days in the life of an exiled Spanish guerilla leader, twenty years after the civil war. "Behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death . . ." Manuel Artiguez (Gregory Peck) is, metaphorically, riding into the valley of the shadow, and that is the visual note to which the film (designed by Trauner) carefully adheres. So the opening daylight scenes, in which the orphaned son of Artiguez' former comrade escapes across the Spanish border and tries to make Artiguez take up arms again, have a tonality that sombrely heralds the grey night when Artiguez, at last emerging from retirement, chooses to confront his personal destiny.

The film seems to be about free will: the individual's need to make the choice worthy of himself, even if it is only to die as he has lived. Artiguez has become a failure in his own eyes, and consequently does not visit his mother while she is dying in a Spanish hospital, in case his lifelong enemy, the police chief Vinolas (Anthony Quinn), captures him. Later, when he knows that the man who brought him

information about his mother is in Vinolas's pay, that Vinolas has sealed off the hospital in order to trap him there, and that his mother is dead, he decides to visit her.

Short dialogue scenes of a type that Zinnemann can handle particularly well (regardless sometimes of the lines that are spoken, and even of the quality of the acting) indicate the kind of moral pressures that can affect decisions of this kind: pressures complicated, in this case, by the church-hating Artiguez's indebtedness for the truth to a priest (Omar Sharif), and to a small boy, beside whom he finds himself wanting in courage. Peck's performance, adequate while it is simply one thread in the dramatic fabric, ceases to work on any level, however, when it is later meant to dominate the film, and the most happily assured moment in the unnecessarily prolonged final sequences is a nostalgic one when a pretty barmaid smiles a Western-style farewell to the departing hero.

Yet the best of this film is pleasantly characteristic of the best of Zinnemann as a whole: his feeling for location (the Franco-Spanish border), his generosity of spirit and the intelligence that he takes for granted in his audience. With his gentle asides (young priests playing ball or elderly ones clipping roses) and the special way in which he introduces each new character so that he or she momentarily matters very much (one certainly expected to see more of Rosalie Crutchley as Vinolas's ailing wife), Zinnemann has a knack of leaving open the possibility of other developments and other endings. One's interest in *Behold a Pale Horse* is held for exactly as long as such a possibility remains.—ELIZABETH SUSSEX

AMELIE, OU LE TEMPS D'AIMER (*Connoisseur*). On the evidence of *Amélie*, it looks as though we have another French director to add to the growing list of young men whose principal aim seems to be to restore the 'tradition of quality' in all its embalmed splendour. Like Bourguignon, Albicocco, and Enrico in *Au Coeur de la Vie*, Michel Drach shows himself here to be a very careful, self-conscious pictorial stylist, composing each shot so that it would make a glossily effective still divorced from its context; like them he is weak when it comes to providing a context which would carry and justify all this artfulness unconcealed by art.

It is conceivable—just—that the material he has chosen could, in other hands, make rather a charming essay in nostalgic romanticism, but in any circumstances it would probably be a close call. The

"THE BEST MAN": GENE RAYMOND AND CLIFF ROBERTSON.



story, told mainly in two long flashbacks, describes the one-sided and ultimately fatal passion of Amélie for her cousin Alain; he is interested only in the sea but doesn't mind her, and they drift into a sort of engagement (there aren't, apparently, so many eligible girls on Mont Saint Michel in the 1880s) until a sinister, slightly Mephistophelian circus showman and his beautiful, heartless daughter blow into town, the boy falls for flashy sophistication and Amélie is left, after a half-hearted attempt to become an actress in Paris, sinking into one of those convenient Victorian declines for which there is no remedy.

To involve us in this rather silly story Drach depends heavily on the dewy charm of his heroine, Marie-José Nat, but this has become decidedly over-worked before we are halfway through, and the conviction rapidly develops that Amélie is just a silly little goose who needs nothing more than a good slapping and a firm injunction to pull herself together and stop being so melodramatic. For the rest, the exotic Breton locations are pretty but explored so lethargically that whatever atmosphere they lend the earlier scenes is gradually dissipated, and the director's attempts to pep up the second half with a strong infusion of Bergman (the whole episode of the showman and his daughter, whose heartlessness is conveyed largely by making Sophie Daumier scream with inane mirth) are hardly the sort of medicine this ailing script needs. Jean Sorel's contribution as Alain is confined to pouting provocatively across the dinner table and frowning out to sea, and the only part of the film which intermittently comes to life is Clotilde Joano's performance as Fany, Amélie's cousin and Alain's sister. Though her precise role in the story except as the narrator of the first flashback remains obscure, she does manage to look sphinx-like in such a way that one is willing to believe she may have a secret worth exploring.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA (M-G-M). The trouble with John Huston nowadays is not so much the decline as the misapplication of an always workmanlike talent. Here is a director who can, above all, tell a story with intelligence and wit, apparently determined to deny himself the essential starting point that a good plot would provide. With *The Night of the Iguana* he is still plodding through Freud country, carefully signposting states of mind and sidestepping unsavoury connotations. Tennessee Williams' play about the human flotsam stranded on the verandah of a Mexican hotel is impressionistic, iconoclastic, bawdy. Not surprisingly, Huston's film is none of these things: it is a movie with a message about what happens to God's creatures when they reach the end of their rope. And, considering the sizeable cleaning-up job involved, it is remarkable how much it has to offer in the way of entertainment.

Without actually evoking the sour taste of Tennessee Williams' world at all, the screenplay (by Huston and Anthony Veiller) contrives to be both witty and alive to most of the innuendoes of the original. Relying as he does on incidents rather than atmosphere for his effects, however, Huston obviously had to begin by injecting some drama into a singularly uneventful play. So the Rev. Laurence Shannon, cynical courier to a group of women teachers and compulsive rapist of young girls, becomes enough of a hero to be played for sympathy, not pity or tolerance, by Richard Burton in his best Jimmy Porter style. His originally hysterical teenage victim, Charlotte, is transformed into a self-possessed, man-eating Lolita (played by Sue Lyon herself), whose blandishments he constantly strives to resist. His rival for Charlotte's affection, Miss Fellowes (Grayson Hall), becomes a real enemy, the sort towards whom he can finally exercise compassion by withholding from her the truth about her own Lesbianism. And here it is that Huston incurs the sort of losses that make one wonder what he hoped to gain by tackling such a subject. Neither Shannon's pity nor his assertion that the truth would destroy Miss Fellowes seems likely. Humour as well as plausibility have gone by the board in the interests of a "significant" moment.

One cannot but proceed to notice that, without reference to its source and judged simply on its own terms, the film amuses by its naiveté almost as much as by its wit. Ava Gardner, crumpled, cackling and enjoying the doglike devotion of a pair of dancing boys, carries little conviction as the nymphomaniac hotel keeper (played on the stage by Bette Davis). Deborah Kerr's assiduously eager performance as the very virtuous portrait artist, who prevents the desperate Shannon from taking "the long swim to China", delights us rather more than enough. And the iguana, unfortunately, has quite a sizeable part. That is really the worst thing of all: the



"NIGHT OF THE IGUANA": BURTON, GRAYSON HALL, AVA GARDNER.

way that nobody can mention breaking a thread or reaching the end of the rope without the director actually supplying a shot of a chain being tugged or an iguana straining at its tether. Sadly, this sort of literalism is becoming a characteristic of John Huston's style.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

MARNIE (Rank), one of Hitchcock's sham-Freud gambles in the field of audience gullibility, apparently left the Master himself feeling that it's hardly worth the bother any more. How else to account for the number of back-projected street sets, the rocking-horse shots of a hunt, the almost insulting accretion of coincidences and the prevalence of thunderstorms at moments of crisis? The often crude Thirties technique—a hand shot through the far side of a safe groping for dollar bills, zoom in, zoom out; the same hand, gloved, gigantic, pointing a shaking gun—is a perfect match for the picture's social attitudes. Sean Connery is a rich publisher familiar with "Sexual Aberrations of the Criminal Female", which tells you early on that the frigid, compulsive liar and thief whom he marries won't really have to go to prison. 'Tippi' Hedren's kleptomaniac is one of a long line of Hitchcock blonde idols, which tells you that whatever she's forced to go through—abhorrent, lingering kisses in enormous close-up, the suppressed affection of a crippled mother who in secret refers to her as her "little sugar plum"—she'll eventually find other riches, new riches, in the bed instead of on a horse. Even as melodrama, and this is the most spuriously elaborate kind, *Marnie* fails. Suspense is constantly undercut, with Marnie's successful tiptoe escape from the scene of a crime made pointless by the irony of her immediate detection in the next shot. This, in turn, involves at least two awkward passages of delaying exposition inside a car, with Connery ticking off the clues which led him to such and such a conclusion as to her guilt, place of hiding, motives and what-have-you. Of course the whole implausible mystery (why does Marnie steal, hate men, suffuse the screen with red every time she sees that colour?) is rooted in guilt and the unconscious, so cannot fail to find indulgent fans. Unfortunately the characters are so synthetic, the flashback climax of flailing legs, poker blows and bloody tee-shirt so naively sensational, as to deny the film any psychological interest. As an acting vehicle it is no less stunted. 'Tippi' Hedren's cool, brazen, child-eyed exterior suggests the character's pathological tensions all right, but avails the actress nothing when it comes to frenzied displays of desperation which are patently beyond her. Sean Connery uses his eyebrows to sardonic effect, but that metallic, private-eye voice suggests none of the authority springing from a financially secure, upper-crust background. Certainly it wouldn't have cut any ice with Marnie for a second. Full marks to Diane Baker as a bitchy eavesdropper and Martin Gabel as a lecherous, glassy-eyed employer. There is also some fast, clean cutting (George Tomasini) and a typically compulsive, cryptic prologue. The rest, alas, is decided solely by technique, intermittently diverting, mainly familiar, and altogether subordinate to Hitchcock's brinkmanship and—well, yes—contempt for the whole lot of us.—PETER JOHN DYER

KUROSAWA

ON



KUROSAWA

PART TWO / gathered, edited & annotated by DONALD RICHIE

THE FIRST PART of this article, in which Akira Kurosawa looks back on his own films, was published in the Summer SIGHT AND SOUND. Donald Richie writes: "I have deleted nothing, and have only added to the material when it seemed relevant." His comments appear in the text in square brackets.

SHICHININ NO SAMURAI

(*Seven Samurai/The Magnificent Seven/Die sieben Samurai/Les Sept samourais*), 1954, Toho

JAPANESE FILMS ALL TEND to be *assari shite iru* [light, plain, simple but wholesome] just like *ochazuke* [green tea over rice, a dish whose *assari* connotations are so celebrated that Ozu once used it in a film title], but I think we ought to have richer foods, richer films. And so I thought I would make this kind of film, entertaining enough to eat, as it were. Of course, I've felt that way from the beginning—still, the labour of doing just that in Japan! Something always comes up. We didn't have enough horses; it rained all the time. It was just the kind of picture that is impossible to make in this country.

And then when it was finished it was too long, but they released it uncut in Japan anyway. [The original was over three hours long and was shown only in 1954 and then only in key cities. A shortened version played second and third runs. A second shortened version was made for export and this is the version most people have seen. A third was made for the Venice Festival—upon which Kurosawa remarks below. There are no prints of the original in Japan, and even negatives of the cut-outs seem to have disappeared.] But we had to shorten it for Venice. Naturally none of the critics

understood it. They all complained about the first half being confused. It certainly was—that was the half that was so cut. I know what a good film it was. The second half, which went to Venice without major cuts, they understood and liked; as a matter of fact minor cuts helped it.

It was difficult making that film. [Kurosawa does not mention that part of the difficulty was occasioned by the producers who, understandably disturbed that an expensive production should be over a year in production and that half of that time should be spent at a distant location site, sent a number of telegrams telling the director to come back at once. These the director answered with other telegrams saying that they had the alternative of allowing him to continue or firing him.] But it was wonderful work too. My own staff, those people who always work with me . . . well, there are no better people in the world to work with. And I don't mean only those who worked on the script or the design or the production—I mean the carpenters, the electricians, the grips. Even if I didn't tell them how to do a single thing, they would know just what I wanted. It is due to people like this that I have been able to make films such as this one.

IKIMONO NO KIROKU

(*Record of a Living Being/I Live in Fear/What the Bird Knew/Si les Oiseaux savaient/Vivre dans le Peur/Bilanz eines Lebens/Ein Leben in Angst*), 1955, Toho

WHILE I WAS MAKING *Seven Samurai* I went to see Hayasaka, who was sick, and we were talking and he said that if a person was in danger of dying he couldn't work very well. He was

quite ill at the time, very weak, and we did not know when he might die. And he knew this too. Just before this we had had word of the Bikini experiments. When he had said a person dying could not work I thought he meant himself—but he didn't, it turned out. He meant everyone: all of us. Next time I met him I suggested we do a film on just that subject. He was pleased. The film was begun. Together and through asking other people we decided that a satire would be best. This followed my idea: I wanted to do a satire, but I didn't know how to make a satire on something like the H-bomb. And this was the problem I kept running up against while trying to write the script. It was difficult to keep it satirical.

As we [Shinobu Hashimoto, Hideo Oguni, and Kurosawa himself] worked on the script we more and more felt that we were really making the kind of picture with which, after it was all over and the last judgment was upon us, we could stand up and account for our past lives by saying proudly: We made *Ikimono no Kiroku*. And that is the kind of film it turned into.

Perhaps that is the reason it might be thought incoherent or even chaotic [i.e. turning a satire into a tragedy]. Still, it was good we made it. Anyhow, the way we felt, how could we have made a satire? This time the entire staff knew how we felt, sensed our confusion. No one said very much, everyone worked very hard. And it was very hard work indeed. After it was all over we had a party to celebrate and Noriko Sengoku [who had a part in the film] said to me: "Well, we worked hard, didn't we? But from now on our parts will be all the more difficult." I agreed with her, and would still agree. Still, after I had made the film, I felt as though I had put down a heavy load, I felt as though I had got rid of lots of things.

It was during the filming of the scenes after the fire in the factory, it was just then that Hayasaka died. This was a great shock. I didn't even have the strength to work, to work well at any rate, and that is why these scenes are so weak. And the ending too [where the hero, gone mad, looks at the sun and says: The earth—at last it is on fire, it is burning up], that is weak. After *Seven Samurai* was over we were all tired out but happy; after *Ikimono* we were exhausted.

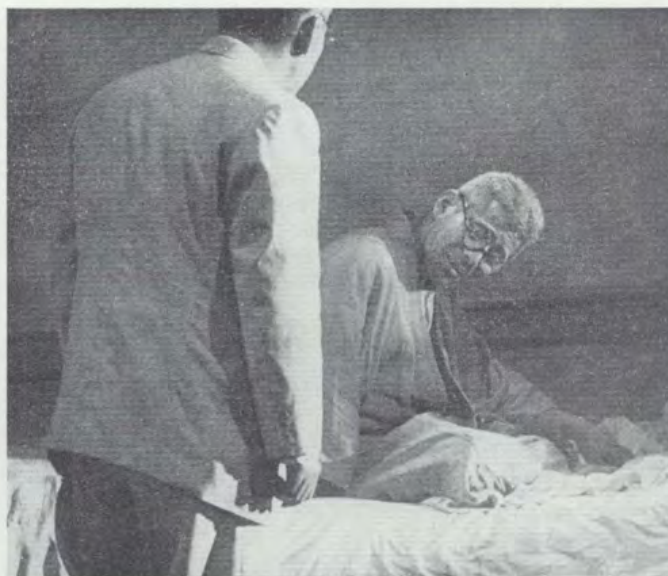
The turn-out for this film was very bad, few people came, and it was my biggest box-office failure. After having put so much of myself into this film, after having seriously treated a serious theme, this lack of interest disappointed me. When I think of it, however, I see now that we made the film too soon. At that time no one was thinking seriously of atomic extinction. It was only later that people got frightened, and that a number of films on the subject appeared, among them *On the Beach*.

KUMONOSUJO

(The Castle of the Spider's Web/The Throne of Blood/Kumonosu-Djo/Macbeth/Das Schloss im Spinnennetz/Château d'Araignées/Le Trône de Sang), 1957, Toho

WITH THIS FILM, *The Lower Depths*, and *The Hidden Fortress*, I seem to have made a *jidai-geki* trilogy. [Almost all Japanese, and Kurosawa is no exception, think of films as being divided into period-pictures (*jidai-geki*) and modern-story pictures (*gendai-mono*) as though these were the only two alternatives. The West has something like this in its attitudes toward Westerns (i.e. the "adult Western" etc.) and the crime film.] I have long thought that the Japanese *jidai* picture is very often historically uninformed, and, beyond this, has never really availed itself of modern film-making techniques. In *Seven Samurai* we tried to do something about that, and *Kumonosujo* had the same general feeling behind it.

Originally I had wanted to produce this film and let a younger director direct it. But when the script was finished and Toho saw how expensive it would be, they asked me to direct it. So I did—my contract expired after these three films.



"I LIVE IN FEAR".

I also had another idea about the film, and that was simply that I wanted to make *Macbeth*. [Kurosawa had seen none of the other film versions, though much later he saw Orson Welles' on television.] The problem was: how to adapt the story to Japanese thinking. The story is understandable enough but the Japanese tend to think differently about such things as witches and ghosts. [Though ghosts tend to be vengeful, as in the innumerable *kaidan* films, the idea of a gratuitously malevolent trio of witches is far from the Japanese imagination.] I decided upon the techniques of the Noh, because in Noh style and story are one. I wanted to use the way Noh actors have of moving their bodies, the way they have of walking, and the general composition which the Noh stage provides. [In the film the most successful examples of this are usually associated with 'Macbeth's' wife, who uses slightly accelerated Noh movements, and the scene where she tries to wash her hands clean is pure Noh; also the asymmetrical composition of Noh is much seen, particularly in the long conversation scenes between 'Macbeth' and his wife before the initial murder. The appearance of Banquo's ghost, on the other hand, uses very little Noh technique.]

This is one of the reasons why there are so very few close-ups in the picture. I tried to show everything using the full-shot. Japanese almost never make films in this way and I remember I confused my staff thoroughly with my instructions. They were so used to moving up for moments of emotion, and I

"THRONE OF BLOOD".



told them to move further back. In this way I suppose you could call the film experimental.

It was a very hard film to make. We decided that the main castle set had to be built on the slope of Mount Fuji, not because I wanted to show this mountain but because it has precisely the stunted landscape that I wanted. And it is usually foggy. I had decided I wanted lots of fog for this film. [Kurosawa has said elsewhere that since he was very young the idea of samurai galloping out of the fog much appealed to him. At the beginning of the original version of this film, Mifune and Minoru gallop in and out of the fog eight times.] Also I wanted a low, squat castle. Kohei Ezaki, who was the art director, wanted a towering castle, but I had my way. Making the set was very difficult because we didn't have enough people and the location was so far from Tokyo. Fortunately, there was a US Marine Corps base nearby and they helped a great deal; also a whole MP battalion helped us out. We all worked very hard indeed, clearing the ground, building the set. Our labour on this steep fog-bound slope, I remember, absolutely exhausted us—we almost got sick.



"THE LOWER DEPTHS".

DONZOKO

(The Lower Depths/Les Bas-fonds/Nachtasyl), 1957, Toho

GORKY'S SETTING WAS Imperial Russia but I changed it to Japan, the Edo period. [Kurosawa's choice of period was intended ironically. Most Japanese look back romantically to the Edo period—age of the great courtesans, great Kabuki, great woodcut artists, great literature—with extreme nostalgia. Kurosawa thinks of life at that time as comparable to the miseries in 19th-century Russia.] Also I used *bakabayashi*. [This is the kind of music—flute, drums, clappers—traditionally associated with travelling entertainments, with shrine fairs, with the annual *matsuri*.] We always think of this music as being joyous and festive. I used it for precisely the opposite reason. I wanted to suggest something tragic and dark. [In the choice of "La Paloma" in *Stray Dog*, the "Cuckoo Waltz" in *Drunken Angel*, and in his deep appreciation for the music of Kurt Weill, Kurosawa has often demonstrated that the use of innocent, unsophisticated music, or at least unsophisticated-sounding music, heightens the tragic suggestion.]

In Edo during this period the Shogunate was falling to pieces and thousands were living almost unendurable lives. Their resentment we can still feel in *senryu* and *rakushu* [satirical poems and entertainments] of the period. I wanted to show this atmosphere, to reveal it, though whether I really did or not, I don't yet know.

This film was easy to make. We worked steadily and well, and shooting did not take long. We had only one closed set, and one open set. We also had many rehearsals, and worked out all the choreography, movements, camera, etc. well in advance. Once, to get everyone in the proper mood, I invited on to the set one of the few remaining practitioners of the old Edo *rakugo* [humorous but highly satiric stories]—and we never had more fun than on that day. Also I wanted Mifune to play his part (the gambler) in the style of Nezumi-Kozo. [A fictitious and romantic robber who saves maidens and only steals from the rich, the hero of a hundred films. Naturally, he is a figure much looked down on by the intelligentsia and only children, farmers, and labourers crowd into his frequent film appearances. A bit like Robin Hood, he is too near in time to have acquired any antique patina, and Kurosawa's idea was personal, highly interesting, and almost dogmatically unfashionable.] That did not work though. Mifune is simply too well-built, he has too much presence, he cannot help but bring his own identity to his roles.

KAKUSHI TORIDE NO SAN-AKUNIN

(Three Bad Men in a Hidden Fortress/The Hidden Fortress/Die verborgene Festung/La Forteresse Cachée), 1958, Toho

THE FIRST HALF of this film was made in Arima in Hyogo [not far from Kobe] and the second half was done around Gotemba at the base of Fuji. I remember there was good weather at Arima and we worked fast, but Fuji!—the weather changes so rapidly that it is cloudy one minute and bright sun the next. Making it there was difficult enough, but just then a big typhoon came and tore up all our scenery. I remember, at one point, we waited over one hundred days for good weather, and so our film was considerably over its three-month production schedule.

And there was always a strong wind, blowing all the time. Come to think of it, there has always been a gale whenever I wanted to make a picture. There was even one during the location scenes for *Sugata*. People have occasionally called me *kaze-otoko* [lit. wind-man] as a joke. On the *Kakushi* set everyone called me that. [Other nicknames for Kurosawa have included *Kurosawa-tenno* or "the Emperor Kurosawa" because of his presumed directorial ways. It is telling, however, that only the newspapers use it, never his own staff.]

Anyway, no matter how hard it was to make this film, it was an enormous hit [and remained Kurosawa's biggest financial success until *Yojimbo*] and the company was delighted. It was very expensive but the books balanced out most comfortably in the black.

WARUI YATSU HODO YOKU NEMURU

(The Bad Sleep Well/The Worse You Are the Better You Sleep/The Rose in the Mud), 1960, Kurosawa Productions (Independent), Toho (Distribution)

THIS WAS THE FIRST film of Kurosawa Productions, my own unit which I run and finance myself. From this film on, everything was my own responsibility. Consequently I wondered about what kind of film to make. Making a film just to make money did not appeal to me—one should not take advantage of an audience. Instead, I wanted to make a film of some social significance. At last I decided to do something about corruption, because it has always seemed to me that graft, bribery, etc., on a public level is the worst crime that there is. These people hide behind the façade of some great organisation like a company or a corporation—and consequently no one ever really knows how dreadful they are, what awful things they do. Exposing them I thought of as a socially significant act—and so I started the film.

But even while we were making it, I knew that it wasn't

working out as I had planned, and this was because I was simply not telling and showing enough. Like the final scene with Mori on the telephone. That suggests, but it is not explicit enough. An even worse man is at the other end of that telephone line, but in Japan you cannot go further than that. [Kurosawa's comment means the above but is almost untranslatable. In Japanese it reads: *Sodo made tsukondeiku to hobo ni sashisawari ga dete kuru* or "if you go (too) far you (might) make trouble come to someone (else?)"—but the inference here, as in the final telephone scene where the villainous Mori calls someone and tells them that the matter (Mifune's murder) is taken care of, is that the greatest corruption of all in Japan is governmental. Kurosawa had suggested this in *Ikiru*, but there he was only dealing with a single ward office in the city government. In *Warui Yatsu* he was, ostensibly, incriminating big business, but if he had tried to show a corrupt government, trouble would indeed have come to someone. The revelations of the film, even so, were considered quite sensational in Japan, though in Europe and America they seemed tame indeed.] At any rate it was too bad I didn't



"SANJURO".

go further. Maybe I could have in say, America, a big country. Japan, however, cannot be this free and this makes me sad.

YOJIMBO

(The Bodyguard/Die Leibwache/Le Garde du Corps), 1961, Kurosawa Productions, Toho (Distribution)

FOR A LONG TIME I had wanted to make a really interesting film—and it finally turned into this picture. The story is so ideally interesting that it's surprising no one else ever thought of it. The idea is about rivalry on both sides, and both sides are equally bad. We all know what this is like. Here we are, weakly caught in the middle, and it is impossible to choose between the evils. [I doubt that Kurosawa intended any political implication. He is not interested in politics. The moral aspects of the problem—of any problem—appeal to him most.] Myself, I've always wanted somehow or other to stop such senseless battles of bad against bad, but we are all more or less weak: I've never been able to. And that is why the hero of this film is different from us. He is capable of standing squarely in the middle and stopping the fight. At any rate, this was the beginning of the film in my mind.

It was truly an enormous popular hit. Everyone at the company said it was because of the sword-fighting. But that is not so, the reason was the character of the hero and what he does. He is a real hero, he has a real reason for fighting. He doesn't just stand by and wave his sword around.

TSUBAKI SANJURO

(Sanjuro Tsubaki/Sanjuro), 1962, Kurosawa Productions, Toho (Distribution)

ORIGINALLY THIS WAS A story by Shugoro Yamamoto [who also wrote the novel upon which Kurosawa's latest, *Aka-Hige* (Red Beard), is based]. I'd changed it around and finished the script before doing *Yojimbo*. In the original version the hero is not very good with the sword but he is smart and he fights with his head. After *Yojimbo* was such a success, however, our company decided to make something like it and so this not-so-strong samurai became the hero, Sanjuro. [Though Kurosawa takes full responsibility for all of his films, the new company naturally has a board, numerous advisers, holds committee meetings, etc.—naturally, since it is a Japanese company—and Kurosawa usually listens to the wishes of these people.] I rewrote the script and was going to give it to Horimichi Horikawa to direct, but again the company decided that I would have to. So, I wrote the script over again and Sanjuro became more athletic, better with the sword.



"HEAVEN AND HELL".

Eventually we only used a third of the original script but we included lots of action not in the original.

From this original we only kept two characters, that played by Kobayashi Keiju [the comic spy who is treated so well by his captors] and by Takako Irie [the winning and funny lady who insists upon observing proprieties in the midst of emergencies], and among the things sacrificed was my original idea of using colour just for the section where the white and red camellias are floated down the stream.

Personally, I think it very different from *Yojimbo*—in Japan the audiences do too. The youngsters loved *Yojimbo*, but it was the adults who liked *Sanjuro*. I think they liked it because it was the funnier and really the more attractive of the two films.

* * *

KUROSAWA DID NOT want to talk about his two latest films. Of the 1963 *Tengoku to Jigoku* (Heaven and Hell/High and Low/The Ransom) he only wanted to say that he liked it better than *Stray Dog*—thus stressing a connection which has been noticed by reviewers in countries where the film has played. About *Red Beard* (to be released in October, 1964, about a late Tokugawa Period doctor—Mifune—and a younger medical student; a story perhaps aligned to that of *Drunken Angel*) Kurosawa did not want to say anything. "After all, I don't know—it isn't finished yet. It has been difficult enough talking about all my past films without trying to decide what I think of this new one."

FILM CLIPS

FIRST A LONG STORY from Hitchcock about the inability of producers to understand his conception of "McGuffin": that excuse for a plot that everybody in the film cares greatly about, and that no one watching it is meant to care about at all.

"It all happened over *Notorious*. You see I was under contract to a producer called David Selznick, who shall be nameless, because naturally I never like to embarrass people with a recital of their little mistakes. Anyway, I had just finished making *Spellbound* for him, and he was looking for a new subject for me. One day he sent me this magazine story, which he thought had great possibilities. It was about this girl, just after the 1914-18 war, who is engaged to a young man from a very snooty family, and her big worry is whether she should tell her fiancé her dreadful secret, which is that she was a spy for the U.S. government and in the course of her duties had to, 'give herself' is the phrase, isn't it?, to one of the enemy. Of course someone knows and it all comes out in the end, but the payoff is that the fiancé's very grand, very old-fashioned mother says simply 'I always knew my son would marry someone fine, but I never dreamt that she would be so fine.'

"Well, I ask you! But Selznick was set on it, so Ben Hecht and I set about making some sense of the basic idea, and eventually we came up with a story about Nazis in Brazil, and a girl who has to get into their confidence, and her love story . . . You remember how it went. The whole point of the thing was that it was a love story, but to set the background we had to have Nazis in South America, and we had to have them there for something, something the American government would want to find out about. But what? We thought of jewels, minerals, all sorts of things, but they all seemed a bit uninteresting. Then I said 'What about uranium?' 'What's uranium?' they asked (this was 1944). 'Well,' I said, 'uranium is an unstable element, and it's very rare. Ever since Rutherford split an atom of it and released a lot of energy, it seems likely that someone, some day, will make a bomb out of it. And with all this talk about some devastating secret weapon we are supposed to be developing it should be topical: anyway, it's different.' Everyone thought it was really a bit far-fetched, but we reasoned that since it was only a pretext it didn't much matter one way or another.

"The thing was, we didn't know how much of this uranium might be needed for a bomb. So I thought we should ask a

scientist, and we made an appointment with a very prominent physicist who was working for the government at the time. It turned out later that he was heading a little group called Manhattan Project. Hecht and I were ushered into his office and after a few polite preliminaries he asked what he could do for us. 'Perhaps you could tell us,' I asked innocently, 'how much uranium one would need to make an atom bomb?' He did a double-take straight out of Mack Sennett and then said very evenly that it was impossible to answer because an atom bomb just wasn't a practical possibility. But if it were, I persisted, would you need a matchbox full, a suitcase full, a lorry-load? But we didn't get any more change out of him, so we figured that if he didn't know certainly nobody else would, and went ahead on the assumption that a wine-bottle full would be sufficient. (I later discovered that after that interview Hecht and I were both followed by federal agents for six months, but that's another story . . .)

"Anyway, I got the production set up, and then about three weeks before we were due to start shooting, I was told that Selznick had sold the whole thing—me, Hecht, Grant, Bergman, Dali, the lot—as a package to R.K.O. Why? Because he thought that a plot which was all about a hassle over something called uranium was too far-fetched. But it's a love story, I said, a *love story*; the uranium doesn't matter a damn . . . Still, at R.K.O. all went as planned. And the film was a big success; nobody cared about the uranium until suddenly Hiroshima happened and then nobody thought it was far-fetched any more. I went on to other films and forgot all about it, until five years later I met a man at a party. He turned out to be Hal Wallis's partner, Wallis being in charge at R.K.O. at the time of *Notorious*, and he spent quite a lot of that party telling me how mad everyone thought I was to insist on making that film all about uranium, and how clever they thought I was afterwards. How, he wanted to know, had I got on to uranium a year before anyone else . . . Another five

JUST A LOVE STORY . . . GRANT AND BERGMAN IN "NOTORIOUS".





EFFORTLESS COMEBACK: ALICE FAYE AND TOM EWELL IN "STATE FAIR".

years went by, and at the Berlin Festival I met a German distributor who had just had a great success releasing *Spellbound* in Germany for the first time. He told me that he was hoping to do as well with *Notorious*, only it did create a problem, since it was all about uranium and of course that was very passé. But, I objected, it wasn't about . . . He swept my objections aside. 'Fortunately,' he said, 'I have had a brain-wave; I have thought of a way to bring it bang up to date in the dubbing. Every time they mention uranium, we make it drugs . . .'

* * *

SEEING THE OLD HAL ROACH comedies at the National Film Theatre recently has presented a sharp reminder of how much most comedy today lacks in sheer professionalism: not so much in the ideas behind it, which may well be excellent, as in the carrying-out of the ideas. Hal Roach himself, in London planning to set up a couple of films with British comedians, has some acute things to say about the present state of comedy. He finds that the great lack is not in comedians—he is particularly enamoured of British comics, who he says are now, as they always have been, the best in the world, especially the funny women like Esma Cannon, Tessie O'Shea and Hattie Jacques—but in comedy writers and directors. It is fascinating to hear him taking to pieces a sequence in *Hugh and I*, or some forgettable film he had gone to see for Spike Milligan, and explaining how it should be restaged and more precisely timed to milk it of its maximum effect. Why then are comedies so often successful these days, if in general they are so fumbled? He has an answer for that too: because there is such a desperate need for amusement that audiences are ready to take the will for the deed. "One of the saddest things I know is to go to the cinema and hear people laughing and the film just isn't funny." Take *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, for instance: "Kramer's big mistake there was to make all the characters heavies. When it was Harold Lloyd hanging from

the side of the building he was a nice, likeable guy and you really cared about him, so you were more involved and that gave the humour of the scene an extra dimension. With all the characters in *It's a Mad etc. World* nobody gives a damn if they live or die."

How does Hal Roach plan to remedy this? In rather a curious way. He has a scheme—or had a scheme, as people over here have told him it is impracticable—for a sort of cooperative financing of films by would-be filmgoers, through what amounts to a Film-of-the-Month club. You would call it the Performing Arts Guild, or something of the sort, and people would pay a maximum subscription of three pounds, which would entitle them to twelve pairs of the best seats in a cinema during the year (there would also be cheaper subscriptions for cheaper seats). If you could get two million subscribers this would provide the organisation with enough money to initiate a programme of film-making to produce the twelve programmes, first and second features, required, and to put a group of actors under contract to appear in them, making back the rest of the money needed from television programmes using the same casts and crews in the intervals of film-making. Then the cinemas would have to be persuaded to play ball. Which sounds ingenious in theory but more than a little dodgy in practice. Can one imagine two million people stumping up three pounds each in advance for a series of films not even made yet, with no guarantee that, even if they are going to see them for only 2s. 6d. a ticket, the result will be worth that to them (even apart from the fact that the plan requires them to be saturated with the same stars on television as well)? Still, at least it is an idea, and it's nice to hear someone having ideas, however impracticable, for revitalising the film industry, instead of just sitting down and moaning.

* * *

NEEDLESS TO SAY, ONE of my excitements of recent months has been *The Moonspinners*: not, heaven knows, because of the film itself, but because Pola Negri was in it. And yet, when one comes to think of it, why should the mere presence of someone who was a star in the silent cinema or an idol of one's own childhood have this special sort of magic? Is it quite simply sentimentality? To a certain extent, of course it is. Ramon Novarro, for instance, may have nothing much to do in *Heller in Pink Tights*, and if we didn't know who he was we would never pick him out as one of the film's excitements. But since we do know, we get a special sentimental kick from seeing him again, just because he is an embodiment of part of the cinema's past. And indeed why not? The only odd thing is that more producers do not cash in on this sort of feeling, which is not after all entirely the prerogative of the film-mad few. In an ordinary suburban cinema a rustle of recognition and interest went through the stalls when Anna May Wong suddenly materialised in *Portrait in Black*; and obviously it was for the cash value of that rustle, small perhaps but real, that Ross Hunter put her in the film in the first place.

However, it is not entirely for silly sentimental reasons that one likes to see the old stars again, even in small supporting roles. It is because usually to have been a star in the first place they must have had something—talent, personality, presence, something special—and as likely as not they still have it. If you had, say, a quite important but not central aunt-role to cast in a film and you had the choice between, say, Spring Byington and Myrna Loy for it, which would you choose? Myrna Loy, surely, and for precisely those qualities which she had and Spring Byington hadn't, that made her a star and Spring Byington a good character actress: that extra precision in timing (remember her two splendid comedy scenes in *The Ambassador's Daughter*, the magisterial way she dealt with Doris Day's vapours in *Midnight Lace*?), the extra dimension of personality, the extra enchanting oddity of diction . . . In short, twenty or thirty years in films should give a performer superior knowhow—which is not to be sneezed at. And twenty or thirty years of stardom should guarantee something



"THE MOONSPINNERS": POLA NEGRI AND HAYLEY MILLS.

more: something at least of that absurd, anachronistic, wonderful quality which enabled Bette Davis to turn *Dead Image* into just about the most riveting film to come out of Hollywood for many a year by the simple expedient of being herself, an outright, downright, unmistakable star.

So many stars bent on comeback have done this, usually by knowing exactly how little need be done on set to obtain the maximum effect on screen. Consider the effortless grace with which Alice Faye sailed through *State Fair*, the complete and perfect professional, while all the young persons performed away like mad and made no impression at all. Think of how *The Road to Hong Kong* came instantly to life as soon as Dorothy Lamour crossed the screen; she didn't *do* as much as Joan Collins, of course, but then she didn't have to. Attention was focused in a flash, and that was that. The same thing

applies to many more cases: Janet Gaynor in *Bernardine*, Laura La Plante in *Spring Reunion*, Jeannette MacDonald in *The Birds and the Bees*, Jessie Matthews in *Tom Thumb* . . . And yet all these comebacks have been without a sequel, largely, it is said, because Hollywood producers, obsessed with the idea of success, feel that the presence of a has-been, however exciting and talented, puts some sort of hoodoo on a film. Perhaps a sentimental devotion to old stars just because of the associations they bring to mind is silly, but surely this sort of superstitious refusal to use resources readily at the disposal of the cinema is even sillier? Anyway, I'm eagerly awaiting Tallulah Bankhead in *Fanatic*, even from Hammer . . .

* * *

AFTER A FAIR GAP, television has been grappling with the cinema again. Granada, with a lot of ballyhoo, brought forth *Cinema* as a summer replacement for *University Challenge*, and the B.B.C. hit back with a revamped version, in English, of a series on the New Wave originally delivered in French for schools. And yet again one was left wondering why film programmes on television are usually so bad. Admittedly the producers may be ham-strung to a certain extent by suggestions that distributors will not play ball if there is a hint of criticism of their products, though this seems to be inadequate as a reason why Granada's programme should be quite so like a series of commercials for what's on at your local this week, without even a suggestion of tongue in cheek. In any case, if you are going to put on a programme like that why choose as film-jockey someone who (with all respect to Mr. Gascoigne on his chosen ground) apparently knows or cares little about cinema? (It was hardly a happy portent that in the final *University Challenge* a week earlier he was to be heard blandly asking questions about the film work of "Maria Cesarès" and "Jacques Prévost".) And why make it so snippety? If it seems a good idea to do a potted history of the musical tied vaguely to *A Hard Day's Night* and *Wonderful Life* (even though without anything from M-G-M or Warner Brothers musicals), surely it would be worth spending a little more than ten minutes on the subject? Programmes can be unashamedly popular or unashamedly intelligent; they may even be both. But it is difficult to see who gains from this sort of unhappy in-between, which would interest neither the film enthusiast nor the non-filmgoer ripe for conversion.

ARKADIN

BOOK REVIEWS

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY, by Charles Chaplin. Illustrated. (Bodley Head, 42s.)

CURRENTLY, WITH THE LARGE-SCALE rediscovery of the other comedians of the golden age—Keaton, Langdon, Lloyd, Laurel and Hardy—there is a critical fashion to try to diminish Chaplin. It can't be done. Buster merits a place beside him, it is true; but this does not lessen Charlie. He is still colossal. In his tramp, the cinema produced a figure of universal mythology, to stand beside Falstaff or Micawber or Arlecchino; different from other great clowns—

Grimaldi, Leno or Grock—in that on film he has a permanent existence, shared with the literary figures and denied to these predecessors. It is still a miracle that the cinema should have produced its giant so early in its career and yet at a time when it was technically equipped to nurse him. It is equally astonishing that the man who created this universal myth half a century ago should still exist in our day, as a rich *père de famille* with an estate in Switzerland, who has now set himself down to write his autobiography.

Astonishment only grows in reading his account of his origins. The world into which he was born, the poor quarters of late Victorian London, seems remoter than Elizabethan England. This first section of the autobiography is in its way as remarkable as anything Chaplin created in the cinema; and, indeed, one constantly wishes that he would realise it in a film. The writing is simple, direct, vigorous; the recollection of the sensations of seventy years ago is complete. And it is supremely satisfying to have at last a definitive (and totally convincing) story of the London waifhood.

Chaplin was born, it seems, in reasonable circumstances in Walworth. His mother remembered still more prosperous days (with a Jewish bookmaker, it has been said). But when Charlie was about four, and his half-brother Sydney three or four years older, the alcoholic father abandoned his family; the mother's health broke down; and Charlie began the trail between cheap lodgings, work-houses and orphan schools. (Hanwell Schools in particular seemed a living hell for a sensitive child.) His actual education was scrappy. Even when he arrived in America he was not a very good reader.

The mother (her stage name was Lily Harley; her real name was probably Hannah Hill) emerges vividly from Chaplin's affectionate

remembrances. There is a photograph of her, a pretty, cheeky-faced creature around twenty. Chaplin has always described her marvelous comic observation and acknowledged his own debt to it. Here he enlarges the picture to describe her ladylike ways; her occasional, well-timed Rabelaisian talk; the madness which afflicted her so that she was never able fully to appreciate the success of her two sons.

She and the father were both performers; and Charlie's gravitation to the stage was, in any event, practically inevitable. He landed a part after a strange series of odd jobs, whose range was probably valuable to him in his later re-creations of street life. There is no question but that he was successful in his legitimate stage career, even if his salary was only in the region of fifty shillings a week. For a child actor on his own, he caught some good work—on the strength, presumably, of his attractive looks and an already developed power of mimicry. Neither he nor his other biographers have recalled that by 1905 he had made *The Green Room Book*, the rather exclusive forerunner of *Who's Who in the Theatre*. From then on it is a success story, with all the excitement of any success story—the passage into the music halls of Edwardian England, the discipline and training of the Karno Companies, the trips to America, and finally, the films.

Chaplin must have been a trial to Sennett's lot in the early days, even to judge from his own account. He was very well aware that he knew more about comedy and about his own potential than anyone else, and he would not, consequently, do as he was told or conform to the rough and ready standards of 1913/14 slapstick. He needed Henry Lehrman and struck when pretty Mabel Normand was set to direct him. Only his rapidly-grown popularity with the public prevented Sennett from firing him. Chaplin's description of these days of cinematic innocence and of his move to Anderson's Essanay Studios gives a picture of primitive pre-war Hollywood almost as evocative as that of Victorian London. Edendale, where Sennett's studio was, "had small lumber-yards and junk-yards, and abandoned-looking small farms on which were built one or two shabby wooden stores that fronted the road." The Keystone Studio "was a dilapidated affair with a green fence round it, one hundred and fifty feet square."

Suddenly, in 1915, he stopped work for a holiday, and learnt that without knowing it he had become a national idol. A lion. A legend. And, curiously, from this very point in his career, *My Autobiography* loses the enchanting quality of its first two hundred pages (it is a very long book, well over 500 pages). Suddenly, from being a rich evocation of a remarkable figure in extraordinary settings, it settles into being quite an ordinary celebrity memoir. It is still fascinating and wonderfully readable, of course, just because Chaplin has been everywhere and known everyone; and (as he should be) he is an admirable story-teller. The description of the Hearst ménages, the appreciation of the Pickfair household, the revelations of what it is like to be an idol, are well worthwhile.

But what is perhaps most revealing is what Chaplin does not tell. There is, for instance, astonishingly little about the films or about his working methods; and, of course, these are the things about which one is most curious. At one point he does set himself to talk about film-making; but the gist of what he says amounts to two or three paragraphs:

The intellectualising of line and space, composition, tempo, etc., is all very well, but it has little to do with acting, and is liable to fall into arid dogma. Simplicity of approach is always best . . .

Time-saving in films is still the basic virtue. Both Eisenstein and Griffith knew it. Quick cutting and dissolving from one scene to another are the dynamics of film technique.

I am surprised that some critics say that my camera technique is old-fashioned, that I have not kept up with the times. What times? My technique is the outcome of thinking for myself, of my own logic and approach; it is not borrowed from what others are doing. If in art one must keep up with the times, then Rembrandt would be a back number compared to Van Gogh.

The point is probably not that Chaplin is hiding anything, but that at his greatest he is a natural. What hints can be derived suggest that he builds a film as they used to build gags on the Halls, with a direct, brick-by-brick structural logic. The films were built upwards out of a fresh, unadulterated invention; not created within some overall conception. Rather than complain that we are not told much about the way the films were made, we should perhaps be thankful that Chaplin, who tends to rationalise too much, never really attempted to rationalise his film-making. He just made films.

All the same one might have enjoyed more plain gossip and reminiscence about what went on when he was at work; but there is little even of this, apart from occasional treasures like that *The Gold Rush* was first inspired by a stereoscopic view of the Chilkoot Pass that he saw one Sunday morning at Pickfair. Two films, significantly, are not even mentioned. *The Circus* we know was associated with personal difficulties and he did not like it. Until now, perhaps, we have not known what he felt about *A King in New York*.

There is another remarkable omission. Keaton (who worked on *Limelight*), Laurel (who was a colleague in Karno days) and Langdon are not mentioned. Nor for that matter is any other living comedian. There is no evidence that Chaplin has ever seen a film apart from his own. It is hard to account for this lack of interest in other artists. It can hardly be jealousy, for Chaplin's position is unassailable. It must be put down, I suppose, to some whimsical sense of discretion which forbids him to discuss the work of other performers. He acknowledges certain reticences about his personal life. Lita Grey, out of respect for his sons, is not even mentioned by name. The marriage with Mildred Harris is only an *entr'acte*. In contrast he is amusingly coy and yet frank about adventures; and in contrast again, speaks with touching sincerity about his happiness in his present, twenty-year-long marriage with Oona O'Neill.

The Joan Barry affair is detailed fully and, as one believes, honestly. So is the story of political persecution in America. Of course this is only Mr. Chaplin's side of the story, but there is no cause to discredit any part of it; and one feels the indignation of the late James Agee, who startled Chaplin by asking, in the middle of a particularly hostile press conference: "How does it feel to be an artist who has enriched the world with so much happiness and understanding of the little people, and to be derided and held up to hate and scorn by the so-called representatives of the American press?"

Subject to the qualifications I have made, *My Autobiography* is a good and sometimes a remarkable book. The narrative is that of a visual story-teller. There is the esteem for words of a self-educated man, which sometimes leads to their being used for colour as much as for correctness. There is the self-conscious philosophy which has lost Chaplin the sympathy of some of his admirers, but which sometimes produces some happy and striking aphorisms. And it is entirely Chaplinesque in that, behind all the revelations, there is still—in the man and the artist—an eventual enigma.

DAVID ROBINSON

"MODERN TIMES".



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CINEMA EYE, CINEMA EAR, by John Russell Taylor.
Illustrated. (Methuen, 30s.)

MOST BOOKS MUST BE read starting from the first page and ending with the last. Although this one seems composed of self-contained chapters on nine film directors, I advise the reader to follow this rule. The introduction is essential to make the author's purpose clear from the start, and I even recommend reading the title first. *Cinema Eye, Cinema Ear*. Does this title imply an alternative? A contradiction? The first sentence of the introduction, with its interrogation: "If the cinema is an art, who is the artist?" gives the answer. John Russell Taylor plunges at once into the old debate, whether the final product owes more to the producer and the author of the story (both responsible for subject-matter), to the dialoguist (who caters for our ears), to the set-designer and the cameraman (our eyes), to the director and the editor (who give the film its shape)? I have already diverged from Mr. Taylor's argument, where a different classification is given of these various part-authors, but he will forgive me: I was only following the implications of his title.

To these questions, I have my own ready answer, which is that I couldn't care less, and that anyway there is *no* answer. This is a condition I acquired early, when I saw a director, who shall remain nameless, well-known for living in a permanent alcoholic stupor, dragged by his cameraman out of the armchair in which he was dozing to show him the set-up; stumbling in a daze to the camera and applying his eye to the view-finder; falling asleep again in this standing position; re-awakened by a tap on the shoulder; giving a hasty approval and crashing back into his armchair for a new kip during the shooting of the scene. The extraordinary thing was that his films, routine box-office entertainment as they were, nevertheless bore the mark of a consistent personality. Was it his? Or a composite one? Anyway a clever parodist of the usual *Cahiers du Cinéma* delirium of interpretation could easily make up a thesis about his ethics, his style and his philosophy.

In his introduction and later in his chapter on Hitchcock, Mr. Taylor explodes these flights of academic fancy by sheer use of common sense. His approach is refreshingly anti-dogmatic. He believes, however, that the domination of the subject by a single mind is not impossible and that there have been a few exceptions: directors who are really sole authors of their films. With this I do not see how anyone could disagree. His book is about "six individualists whose main common denominator is their steadfast refusal to fit neatly into any preconceived patterns . . ." To which he adds three representatives of what he still calls belatedly the "New Wave".

It is about the choice of these six plus three that I beg his permission partly to differ. The critic who opens his chapter on Bergman with these words: "Perhaps criticism can hardly help being confession," will not begrudge me a confession. I had lost all hope and interest in the cinema until it was revived a few years ago thanks to Buñuel, Antonioni and Resnais. I still think that without *Nazarin*, *Viridiana*, *L'Avventura*, *La Notte*, *Hiroshima* and *Marienbad*, and recently Robert Enrico's *Au Coeur de la Vie*, the cinema wouldn't be worth talking about, and seldom good enough to fill an idle afternoon. This makes it very difficult for me to understand how Mr. Taylor can treat almost on the same level Fellini and Antonioni, Bresson and Buñuel, Hitchcock and Bergman, Truffaut-Godard and Resnais.

His studies of their work are scholarly and penetrating. He remembers better than I do the construction of their films and many visual and aural details of the scenes. He has taken immense trouble to analyse their intentions and their style (or deliberate absence of style). What I fail to understand is his scale of values, and how I can agree with him on such a wide area as far as principles are concerned, but disagree so violently in practice.

Admirable is his understanding of Antonioni's stand in favour of women slighted and oppressed by spineless, frivolous, lecherous males whom they despise. And yet he undervalues *La Notte*, my favourite. Yet his sympathy for Antonioni does not prevent him feeling as much affinity with Fellini, one of my *bêtes noires*. Didn't it occur to him that the author of *La Dolce Vita*, far from recording facts, wallows endlessly and complacently in corruption, while the author of *La Notte*, dealing with the same people in the same circles, takes a definite critical standpoint? After which a study of their styles leaves me totally indifferent.

The Buñuel chapter, however much it owes to Ado Kyrrou and Freddy Buache, and in spite of minor errors of fact, is perhaps the best assessment of Buñuel's importance, and certainly the only one in the English language (although the contention that *Un Chien Andalou* "does not wear well," as *L'Age d'Or* does, because it is "a Dali conception adroitly realised by Buñuel" is a purely subjective

statement without factual foundation). Yet how is it possible to enjoy and analyse with the same equanimity the opposite views of Buñuel the atheist and Bresson the Christian apologist? If Mr. Taylor were among those who dissociate form from content, it would be understandable, but he makes clear on various occasions that such a dichotomy is not acceptable.

With his chapter on Bergman I cannot find any fault. I share his admiration for *Smiles of a Summer Night* and for *Wild Strawberries*. I share also his puzzlement about Bergman's recent work. Has he found God and become a misogynist in the process? We don't know yet. The re-examination of Hitchcock is also one of the most brilliant passages of the book. The *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics have not done any good to Hitchcock with their wild and far-fetched philosophical interpretations. A master-thriller he is, and that's enough for me too.

It is all the more surprising, after such carefully weighted assessments, to find Mr. Taylor grossly overrating the old-fashioned ripples of the so-called "New Wave" in the persons of Messieurs Truffaut and Godard, while underrating Resnais, who shouldn't anyway be ranged under this heading. Resnais is a true revolutionary, an innovator in the cinema. The badly-scripted, badly-directed, badly-shot films of Truffaut-Godard and their protégés are putting the clock back to the worst period of the French cinema in the Twenties. They are not, as it is often said, the followers of Renoir, but of the old-hat old hacks Donatien, Léonce Perret, Roger Lion and Gaston Rondès, all blissfully forgotten as the "New Wavists" will soon be. I know Mr. Taylor is not alone among English critics to be taken in by the publicity bluff of this mutual admiration society. It is only fair to note that he shows more critical sense than most of his fellow critics when he discusses *Jules et Jim*, but his strictures appear to me to be beside the point. Whether or not Jeanne Moreau is miscast seems irrelevant. A film where the states of mind and feelings of the characters have to be constantly explained by some extraneous voice on the sound track, only betrays the scriptwriter's impotence and the director's inability to use camera, dialogue and actors. No actress could overcome such crippling inadequacy.

The book ends on a series of useful filmographies. I am not qualified to check the accuracy of them all, but I must point out two mistakes in the credits of *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'Or*. For Albert Dubergen, read Albert Duverger (cameraman) and in the cast, for Cardinal de Lamberdesque, read simply Caridad de Lamberdesque (the burning maid). What a pity! Buñuel would have liked to have a real Cardinal in his cast.

JACQUES BRUNUIS

CINEMA, by Thomas Wiseman. Illustrated. (Cassell, 36s.)

THE PUBLISHERS DESCRIBE THIS as "a definitive history of the world cinema" and one of an "authoritative series on the Arts of Man". Somewhat pretentious claims for a book which, on the face of it, would seem intended for coffee-table display rather than serious study, since it is of formidable size and weight, produced with a layout designed to benefit stills rather than text, and copiously illustrated. The cover photographs (the Odessa Steps; Falconetti; Peter O'Toole's Lawrence; *La Dolce Vita*) are representative, though on the whole the stills are well chosen and not over-familiar.

Mr. Wiseman himself, in a modest preface, deplores the impossibility of writing the history of the cinema in sixty thousand words and apologises in advance for his omissions. He goes on, after the merest sketch of cinema 'pre-history', to summarise most of the stock judgments on the silent era, without any suggestion that some of these could stand revision. The advent of sound takes him, naturally, to Hollywood, where he is obviously most at home; and the rest of the book is virtually an affectionate history of the American cinema, with digressions on the better known French, German and Italian films. It is when he reaches the contemporary, or what he calls the 'personal' cinema, that Mr. Wiseman's priorities begin to show. Brando, Kazan and the Method get three pages. Bresson and Ozu go unmentioned. Bergman is treated with respectful awe, as "one of the few film-makers to whom one can apply the term great without devaluing it"; and Resnais is castigated for using the cinema for "a trivial and silly purpose". Perhaps the most idiosyncratic of his verdicts is on *The Exterminating Angel*: "This is an interesting idea, but Buñuel develops it in a style reminiscent of Noël Coward's plays of the Twenties, and the director's technique is never up to his satiric intent."

BRENDA DAVIES



Charles Chaplin MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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CORRESPONDENCE

On the Map

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—I was very interested in the "Front Page" feature of your Summer issue. The accompanying map, showing the places where the three films you selected had received public showings, was fascinating. However, I feel that your choice of films may perhaps give a false and over-optimistic impression. Both *Vivre sa Vie* and *Viridiana* by the way they were promoted would attract audiences for the wrong reasons. After all, the first is about a prostitute whilst the second had the history of its being banned in Spain. It was, in fact, advertised in Leeds as "Viridiana and her Lecherous Uncle"! The same criticism cannot, of course, be aimed at your choice of *Marienbad* as the third film in your survey—but this film received far more publicity and critical attention than most other continental films and is thus also non-typical.

Perhaps a truer picture could be obtained by a similar survey using *Nazarin*, Ray's *Two Daughters* and *Salvatore Giuliano*. I am sure that such a survey would reveal many, many more blank areas on the map. Needless to say, all three films have been given public showings at the Bradford Civic Playhouse.

Yours faithfully,
JAMES G. MEDCALF

Film Secretary,
Bradford Civic Playhouse

Peter Lorre

SIR,—In regard to the Peter Lorre article in your latest number, pleasant memories prompt me to confirm that *Stranger on the Third Floor* was indeed an unusually good "B" picture; a quietly haunting, disturbing and evocative piece of work by a director named Boris Ingster who seems to have done little otherwise, in films at any rate. Lorre was all one would expect, although as I recall it his footage was not of star proportions; and there were sensitive performances by John Maguire and Margaret Tallichet, who proceeded to fade into obscurity. Altogether it would seem to qualify as a genuine "lost film", though typical of the sort of low-budget experimentation RKO occasionally ventured at that time and, in its restrained atmosphere of unease, somewhat prophetic of the Val Lewton series to come.

I would like to mention another film that your writer seems unaware of, in which Lorre gave one of his finest performances—a Columbia wartime release called *The Face Behind the Mask*, which must also have been the best film that very uneven expatriate director Robert Florey ever made. Although sold as a typical horror movie, it was actually, like *Stranger on the Third Floor*, restrained and haunting rather than frightening. Lorre gave a most moving and touching characterisation as a naive, idealistic immigrant to America who—while striving to adjust to his new environment—suffers an accident in which his face is burned beyond recognition. Affecting a mask and unable to find employment because of his appearance, he is more or less forced into crime, though meanwhile he has found love with and married a blind girl (Evelyn Keyes at her most charming). When rival gangsters kill her, he exacts a grim revenge. This may sound like a typical sensational thriller; I can only repeat that it wasn't . . .

Yours faithfully,
G. G. PATTERSON

Toronto, Ontario

Agee on Film

SIR,—William S. Pechter's "On Agee on Film" was for the most part a refreshingly unprejudiced view of Agee's real status as a film critic. But Pechter seems to hold with Agee that the cinema underwent in the Forties a kind of Dark Age, due mainly to the tyranny of the studios and the complacency of the public. Unfortunately, Agee cannot be let off the hook so easily. While he was praising *Treasure of Sierra Madre*, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *Henry V*, *The Story of G.I. Joe*, and other 'original' products of the period, he was also being exposed to *The Big Sleep*, *Notorious*, *Fort Apache* and *Diary of a Chambermaid*. Agee's underground reputation has built him up as a courageous critic; in fact, his preferences for Huston, Wyler, Olivier and Wellman over Hawks, Hitchcock, Ford and Renoir are

disturbingly typical of his time, especially when one considers his genuine sensitivity to Chaplin, Vigo or Keaton. He was capable of appreciating the values of the Golden Age, but when confronted with the values of his own times, he was unable to make precisely those differentiations between the transient and the eternal which are the essence of good criticism. In almost every case Agee's judgments have been proved wrong by time. Agee might have been forgiven for erecting false values in the midst of a waste land; but not for mistaking for a waste land what was in fact something like a paradise.

Yours faithfully,
GEOFFREY O'BRIEN

New York

FESTIVALS: VENICE

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Joseph Losey's *King and Country*. Its story of a shell-shocked World War I private, shot as a deserter because he "just walked away from the guns" after three years at the front, is reminiscent of *Paths of Glory*, but where Kubrick's film was a coldly objective analysis of the way individuals are crushed by the mechanics of war, *King and Country* goes direct for emotion. At times the script hovers perilously close to sentimentality, but Losey's direction is a miracle of tact, discarding his intricate camera style for an almost classical simplicity; cutting away from emotional pressure to ironical cut-ins (a flash shot for instance, when Hamp talks of how he tried to walk away from the battlefield to his home in Islington, of a doorway with "Women of Britain Say Go!" chalked on it); and never allowing his hero to play for sympathy. Private Hamp, in fact, comes over not as a tragic hero, but as a helpless animal, and the sympathies of the film have the same eloquence of inarticulacy. Hamp's fellow soldiers talk of his predicament, but rage against the mud and rats, and think of their own skins; at the wildly drunken party which they contrive in the death cell before the execution, one of them uninhibitedly cradles Hamp in his arms, but at the same time talks with indifference of death as something which faces them all, while another snatches away the last bottle of rum from the condemned man to drink himself. In its way, *King and Country* is a devastating film.

TOM MILNE

HUSTON IN EDEN

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showing the wickedness of man before the Flood, the generations multiplying upon the earth, and so on. For the Creation itself, the great photographer Ernst Haas is roaming the world filming natural objects, from volcanoes to butterflies, which will then be edited into a brief, poetic montage, using Stravinsky's special score.

The weakness of the script lies in the stilted bits of extra dialogue that Fry has written in, notably for the Ark scenes. ("The lion is ready for his milk," says Noah, while son Ham muses, "When will . . . our feet again know the earth?") This, apparently, was Dino's idea. But Fry, who was furious with what they did to his script of *Barabbas*, is sanguine that things will be better this time. Huston is not really an "action director", and has no taste for the usual clichés of "spectaculars". This, it seems, will be an off-beat epic—down to the vaseline smeared on the camera lens to give the Paradise scenes an unearthly glow. It could all be powerful and unusual, or just silly. Huston claims to be deeply stirred by Genesis as myth and moral saga; it has affinities with *Moby Dick*, if with none other of his subjects. He gives the impression of being a tired man, yet much of his dazzling wayward brilliance still remains, after a long squandered career of what looks like lazy devil-may-care compromise, shooting films when he'd rather be shooting elephants. It's finally up to him to stop this expensive gamble from becoming another white elephant film.

JOHN ARDAGH

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20th CENTURY-FOX for *Hush*, *Sweet Charlotte*, *Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*, *State Fair*.
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 UNITED ARTISTS/UNIFRANCE for *The Man from Rio*.
 M-G-M for *The Night of the Iguana*, *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, *David Copperfield*, *Camille*, *The Actress*.
 PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Heller in Pink Tights*, *Love with the Proper Stranger*.
 RKO-RADIO PICTURES for *Notorious*.
 WARNER-PATHE for *My Fair Lady*, photograph of George Cukor.
 WARNER-PATHE/ANGLO AMALGAMATED for *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Tomb of Ligeia*.
 BLC/British Lion for *Lord of the Flies*.
 BLC/COLUMBIA for *The Pumpkin Eater*.
 BLC/COLUMBIA/CENTAUR ENTERPRISES for *Lilith*.
 WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS for *The Moon-Spinners*.
 GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Bande à Part*, *La Peau Douce*.
 CONNOISSEUR FILMS for *Seven Samurai*.
 BARGATE FILMS for *Throne of Blood*.
 COMPTON-CAMEO FILMS for *L'Orribile Segreto del Dottor Hichcock*.
 TOHO COMPANY for *I Live in Fear*, *Heaven and Hell*, *Sanjuro*, *The Lower Depths*.
 CINERIZ for *Il Deserto Rosso*.
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 A. J. FILMS for *La Vie à l'Envers*.
 BARRANDOV STUDIOS for *Lemonade Joe*.
 DINO DE LAURENTIIS for *The Bible*.
 JOHN FRANCIS LANE for *The Moment of Truth*.

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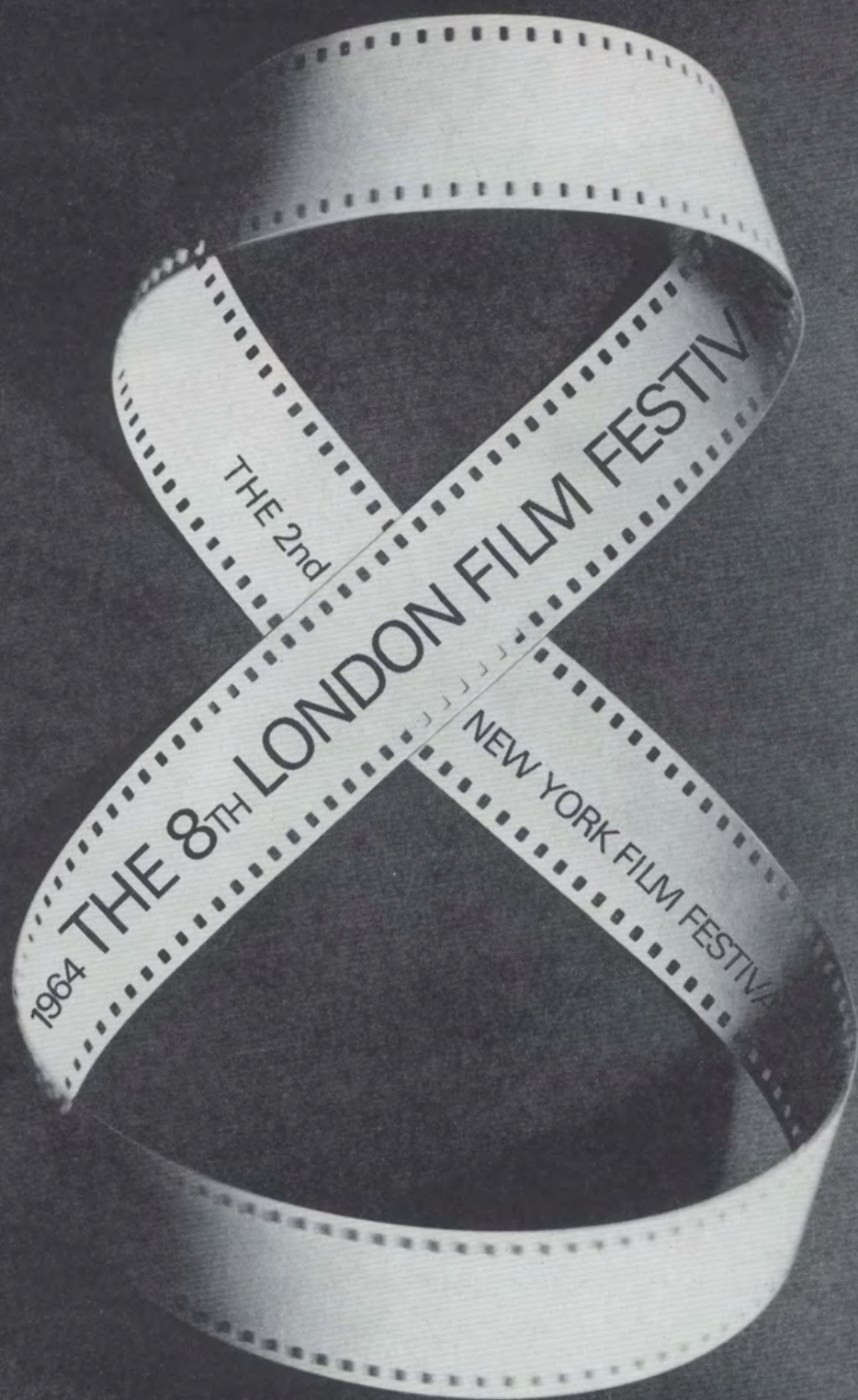
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A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films of special interest to *SIGHT AND SOUND* readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars

- ***AMELIE** (*Connoisseur*) Pictorially conscious story of ill-fated love, set in 1880s Brittany. Lashings of applied style, under which the plot and the heroine (Marie-José Nat) slowly dwindle into a decline. (Jean Sorel, Sophie Daumier; director, Michel Drach.) *Reviewed.*
- ***BECKET** (*Paramount*) Extravagant big-screen blow-up of Anouilh's fragile historical charade, with Peter O'Toole and Richard Burton as a capricious Henry II and a solemn Becket. John Gielgud's Louis of France steals most of the honours going. (Donald Wolfit; director, Peter Glenville. Technicolor, Panavision 70.)
- ***BEDTIME STORY** (*Rank*) Marlon Brando and David Niven as Riviera confidence tricksters, acting as partners and rivals in separating gullible ladies from their money. Direction only so-so, but script heartless and acting stylish. (Shirley Jones; director, Ralph Levy. Technicolor.)
- ***BEHOLD THE PALE HORSE** (*BLC/Columbia*) Spanish police chief tempts ex-Civil War fighter into a death trap; but the crises are mostly those of conscience. Basque locations; solid direction by Fred Zinnemann. (Gregory Peck, Anthony Quinn, Omar Sharif.) *Reviewed.*
- *****BEST MAN, THE** (*United Artists*) Convention scrap between rival candidates for presidential nomination, with canny old ex-president intervening. Cracking dialogue by Gore Vidal, irresistible *roman à clef* overtones, high calibre acting. (Henry Fonda, Cliff Robertson, Margaret Leighton; director, Franklin Schaffner.) *Reviewed.*
- ***CARPETBAGGERS, THE** (*Paramount*) Two-and-a-half-hour canter through Harold Robbins' sex-strewn bestseller. Acres of lunatic plot leave little room for mise-en-scène, but Edward Dmytryk does a briskly efficient job, John Michael Hayes contributes some takingly tough dialogue and George Peppard makes the most of a young star's dream role. (Carroll Baker, Alan Ladd, Bob Cummings, Martha Hyer. Technicolor, Panavision.)
- *****CHEYENNE AUTUMN** (*Warner-Pathé*) Three stars mainly for the first hour: an Indian tribal trek and magnificent 70 mm compendium of Fordiana. Thereafter, a comic Wyatt Earp, uneasy performance by Karl Malden and much pidgin English rather diminish the grandeur. (Richard Widmark, Carroll Baker, Edward G. Robinson. Technicolor, Super Panavision 70.)
- CLEOPATRA** (*Fox*) The film which makes it all too apparent that with £14 million, any amount of assorted talent, extravagant locations, and a plot-line sanctified by Shaw and Shakespeare, it's still possible to make a pretty dull movie. (Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Rex Harrison; director, Joseph L. Mankiewicz. DeLuxe Color, Todd-AO.)
- COMEDY MAN, THE** (*BLC/British Lion*) Kenneth More as ageing repertory actor who makes a belated success in TV commercials and finds his own integrity in the process. Downbeat look at show business, shakily directed and written, honestly played. (Billie Whitelaw, Dennis Price; director, Alvin Rakoff.)
- *****DEVI** (*Contemporary*) Satyajit Ray's evocative, charmingly moody tale, set in the India of a hundred years ago, of a young bride whose father-in-law reveres her as a reincarnation of the Goddess Kali. (Sharmila Tagore, Soumitra Chatterjee, Chabi Biswas.) *Reviewed.*
- DO YOU LIKE WOMEN?** (*Balch Films*) Crazy comedy thriller about a young man involved with occult gang who like to eat women served up with sauce and plenty of vegetables. Few moments of macabre humour, but it should really have been made by Buñuel or Feuille. (Sophie Daumier, Guy Bedos, Edwige Feuillère; director, Jean Léon.)
- FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, THE** (*Rank*) Serious historical spectacle. In other words, Christopher Plummer, pettishly tossing a goblet into the bath, represents the decadence, while Sophia Loren pouts, Stephen Boyd is stern, and Alec Guinness soliloquises gloomily. Still, the sets are big, there's a nice chariot race and duel, and James Mason. (Director, Anthony Mann. Technicolor, Ultra-Panavision.)
- *****GOLDFINGER** (*United Artists*) Best Bond to date, with Sean Connery driving the Aston Martin special, out-judoing Honor Blackman, and finally locked in Fort Knox with a ticking atom bomb. Art direction a knock-out; thundering fun. (Gert Frobé, Shirley Eaton; director, Guy Hamilton. Technicolor.)
- GUNS AT BATASI** (*Fox*) Tough, staunch British R.S.M. copes according to his code with Congo-style troubles in emergent African state. Richard Attenborough's simple soldier stands out from the surrounding clichés. (Jack Hawkins, Flora Robson; director, John Guillermin. CinemaScope.)
- ***HARD DAY'S NIGHT, A** (*United Artists*) Brave try at avant-garde pop vehicle for the Beatles. Frenzy dominates to the detriment of pleasure, but the songs are good and there are engaging moments of quiet. (Wilfrid Brambell, Norman Rossington; director, Richard Lester.) *Reviewed.*
- ****IRMA LA DOUCE** (*United Artists*) Non-musical version of the play, surprisingly softened up by Billy Wilder to suggest that all is really innocence in the Rue Casanova. Excellent Trauner sets; captivating performance by Shirley MacLaine. (Jack Lemmon, Lou Jacobi. Technicolor, Panavision.)
- *****KING AND COUNTRY** (*Warner-Pathé*) John Wilson's play *Hamp*, about court-martial in the trenches, deep-etched in acid to indict the rules of war. Modest, beautifully designed production; Tom Courtenay agonisingly effective as the doomed private. (Dirk Bogarde; director, Joseph Losey.)
- ****LORD OF THE FLIES** (*BLC/British Lion*) Peter Brook's adaptation of William Golding's novel about castaway schoolboys and their descent into primitive savagery, filmed in Puerto Rico. The youthful cast can't quite convey the final horror: all the same, a near miss. (James Aubrey, Tom Chapin, Hugh Edwards.) *Reviewed.*
- ****LOVE AT TWENTY** (*Fox*) Five-episode film of young love in five countries. Truffaut takes up the story of Antoine Doinel with infinite grace and wit. The rest isn't up to very much, but stay to the end for the Wajda. (Jean-Pierre Léaud, Zbigniew Cybulski, Eleonora Rossi-Drago; directors, Truffaut, Wajda, Renzo Rossellini, Shintaro Ishihara, Marcel Ophüls. Totalscope.)
- ****LOVE WITH THE PROPER STRANGER** (*Paramount*) Atmospheric New York locations and naturalistic interludes decorate story of shopgirl and jazz musician, who finally win through against her family and his reluctance to settle down. Robert Mulligan's best since *Fear Strikes Out*. (Natalie Wood, Steve McQueen, Edie Adams.) *Reviewed.*
- ***MAGNIFICENT SHOWMAN, THE** (*Rank*) Lethargic account of the tribulations of circus-owner John Wayne, touring Europe in search of his beloved—Rita Hayworth, reclaimed from drink and worse for final triumph on the trapeze. (Claudia Cardinale, Lloyd Nolan; director, Henry Hathaway. Technicolor, Super Technirama presented in Cinerama.)
- ***NAKED AMONG WOLVES** (*Contemporary*) East German film about divided loyalties in Buchenwald following discovery of a small Polish boy among the prisoners. Sober and conscientious, but it arrives too hard on the heels of *Passenger*. (Erwin Geschonneck, Fred Delmare; director, Frank Beyer. Totalvision.)
- ***NIGHT OF THE IGUANA, THE** (*M-G-M*) Tennessee Williams' play about an assortment of human flotsam washed up at a Mexican hotel, with about-to-be-slaughtered iguana in attendance. More than a little foolish, but tolerably entertaining for all that. (Richard Burton, Ava Gardner, Deborah Kerr; director, John Huston.) *Reviewed.*
- OF HUMAN BONDAGE** (*M-G-M*) Maugham's novel of club-footed medical student and waitress-turned-prostitute in Edwardian London. Survives its chequered passage to the screen (change of director, etc.), but only just. (Kim Novak, Laurence Harvey, Siobhan McKenna; director, Ken Hughes.)
- *****PARAPLUIES DE CHERBOURG, LES** (*Bargate*) The girl from the umbrella shop in Cherbourg sees her lover off to the army, then marries elsewhere for security. Jacques Demy's all-singing operetta, as pretty, fragile and enchantingly coloured as the umbrella shop's own wares. (Catherine Deneuve, Anne Vernon, Marc Michel. Eastman Colour.)
- ****PEAU DOUCE, LA** (*Gala*) Truffaut's tragi-comedy of adultery, involving a middle-aged literary man, his wife, and the air hostess he falls for during a flight to Lisbon. Less immediately winning than *Jules et Jim*, but no less subtle in its organisation and impressionistic detail. (Jean Desailly, Françoise Dorléac, Nelly Benedetti.) *Reviewed.*
- PHANTOM LOVERS** (*Gala*) Happy family of Roman ghosts are threatened with the loss of their ancestral palazzo to property developers. Fragile fantasy, with Mastroianni as its mainstay. (Vittorio Gassman, Sandra Milo, Belinda Lee; director, Antonio Pietrangeli. Technicolor.)
- ***PUMPKIN EATER, THE** (*BLC/Columbia*) Jack Clayton's version of the Penelope Mortimer novel about the emotional life of a woman with too many children and a chronically unfaithful husband. Intense, well-acted, directed to within an inch of its life. (Anne Bancroft, Peter Finch, James Mason.)
- RATTLE OF A SIMPLE MAN** (*Warner-Pathé*) Rather wildly opened-out version of determinedly saucy three-character stage play, with Diane Cilento spirited as a tart with a heart and Harry H. Corbett unidiomatic as her timid North Country customer. (Director, Muriel Box.)
- ROBIN AND THE 7 HOODS** (*Warner-Pathé*) Frank Sinatra as a Chicago gangster who accidentally acquires a Robin Hood reputation, then decides to try to live up to it. The Clan supports. Intermittent engaging ideas are promptly smothered by weak direction. (Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Peter Falk; director, Gordon Douglas. Technicolor, Panavision.)
- 7th DAWN, THE** (*United Artists*) Planter William Holden, Eurasian Capucine and English Rose Susannah York involved with the affairs of Malayan terrorists. Endurance test for all concerned, with treks through impenetrable jungle among the least of the ordeals. (Director, Lewis Gilbert. Technicolor.)
- STRAIT-JACKET** (*BLC/Columbia*) Hopeful shoecker with Joan Crawford suffering splendidly (black wig and jangling bracelets) as an axe-murderer returned to the bosom of her family, supposedly cured, after twenty years in an asylum. Script and direction give no help. (Diane Baker, Leif Erickson; director, William Castle.)
- SYSTEM, THE** (*BLC/British Lion*) Boys chase girls on English holiday beach, with one or two Felliniesches. Oliver Reed plays the Don Juan of the beaches, Jane Marrow the girl who puts him in his place; atmospherics occasionally gloomy, often vulgar. (Barbara Ferris, Julia Foster; director, Michael Winner.)
- WHEEL OF FIRE** (*Paramount*) U.S./Spanish horror comic about the man, horribly burned by his spurned lover, who hides his face under a mask and returns to take his revenge, and so forth. (Barry Sullivan, Martha Hyer; director, Julio Coll.)
- YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW** (*Paramount*) Loren and Mastroianni co-starred as poor Neapolitan couple, idle Milanese couple, and Roman call girl and customer. Familiar Italian *pasta*, cooked up with maximum commercial know-how and minimum taste. (Director, Vittorio De Sica. Technicolor.)



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